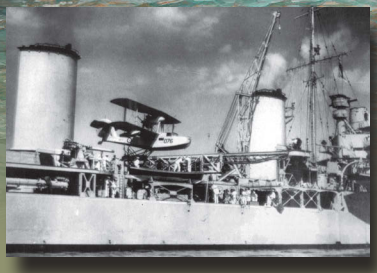
COMMONWEALTH CRUISERS 1939–45



ANGUS KONSTAM

ILLUSTRATED BY PAUL WRIGHT

Author

Angus Konstam hails from the Orkney Islands, and is the author of over 50 books, 30 of which are published by Osprey. This acclaimed and widely published author has written several books on piracy, including *The History of Pirates*, and *Blackbeard: America's Most Notorious Pirate*. A former naval officer and museum professional, he worked as the Curator of Weapons at the Tower of London and as the Chief Curator of the Mel Fisher Maritime Museum in Key West, Florida. He now works as a full-time author and historian, and lives in Edinburgh.

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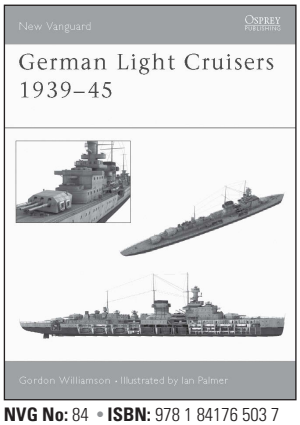
Paul Wright has painted ships of all kinds for most of his career, specializing in steel and steam warships from the late 19th century to the present day. Paul's art has illustrated the works of Patrick O'Brian, Dudley Pope and C.S. Forester amongst others, and hangs in many corporate and private collections all over the world. A Member of the Royal Society of Marine Artists, Paul lives and works in Surrey.

Other titles in the series



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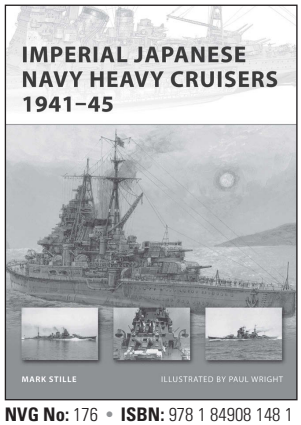

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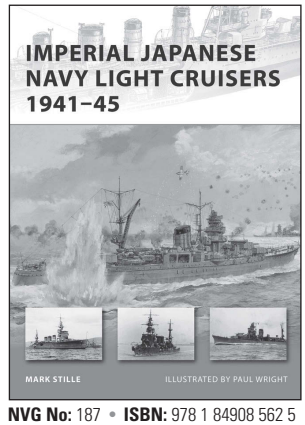

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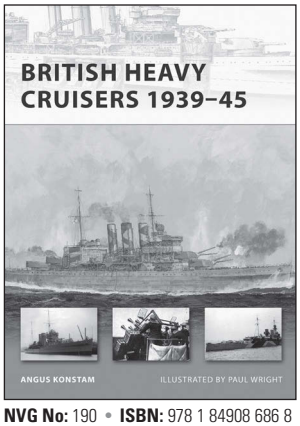

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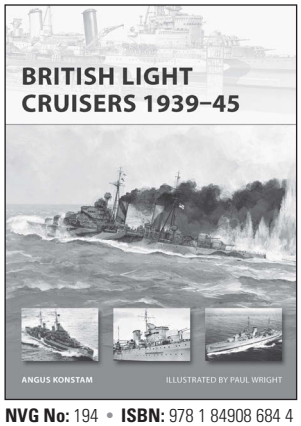

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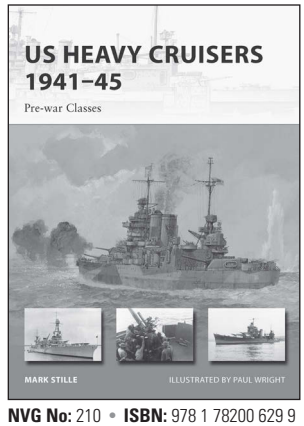

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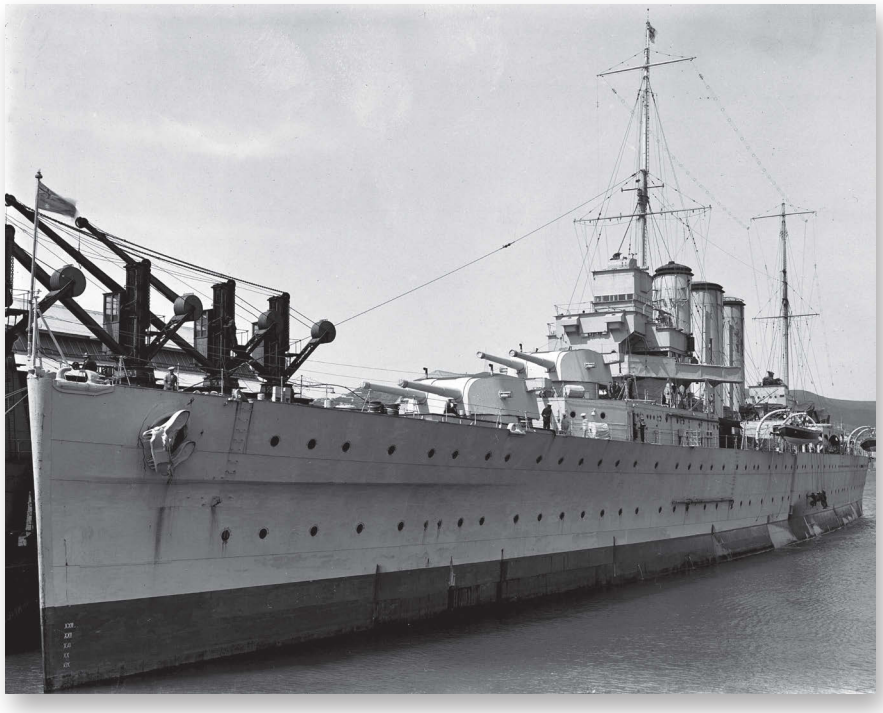

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Title page image: HMAS *Canberra* pictured in Wellington, New Zealand, before the outbreak of war. At this stage she lacked her own aircraft – a catapult was only fitted to her in early 1940, before she joined the hunt for German raiders in the Indian Ocean.

PHOTOS

All photos in this book are courtesy of the Stratford Archive

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COMMONWEALTH CRUISERS 1939–45

INTRODUCTION

During the opening decades of the 20th century the British Empire was at its zenith. Taken together, this vast collection of dominions, colonies, protectorates and other territories encompassed nearly a quarter of the world's *terra firma*, and Great Britain ruled over the lives of a fifth of the world's population – around 460 million people. A century later it is hard to imagine Britain as a global superpower, as almost all of its territories have gained their independence, and Britain's armed forces are a fraction of the size they were in the mid-20th century, when the fate of Britain and her empire hung in the balance.

Even during this Imperial heyday, some parts of the empire were considerably more important than others. Britain was responsible for the defence of the empire as a whole, and for the full protection of colonies, protectorates and other smaller parts of the empire. Dominions were an exception. These were what the Balfour Declaration of 1926 described as

HMAS *Canberra* was one of three Kent class heavy cruisers that saw service with the Royal Australian Navy. These formed part of the larger group of Treaty cruisers that were specifically designed to protect ocean trade routes around the world. This pre-war photograph of her was taken during a visit to Wellington, New Zealand.

HMAS *Australia* was a sister ship of *Canberra*, and entered service in 1928. During the war she served as the flagship of the ANZAC Squadron and its organizational successors, and saw extensive service in Pacific waters.

'autonomous communities within the British Empire'. These included India, Australia, Canada, New Zealand and South Africa as well as other smaller territories. To varying degrees these dominions were responsible for their own defence, and their armed forces were expected to play a part in the global defence of the empire. It was these dominions that supplied the bulk of Imperial troops during World War I, and whose servicemen were also called upon to fight during the even larger global conflict of World War II.

Of these dominions, the economies of Australia, Canada and New Zealand were largely dependent on maritime trade. It therefore made sense that these dominions should play their part in the protection of their trade routes, and in the maritime defence of their own territories. In time of war, these fledgling dominion navies could also support the Royal Navy, particularly in the defence of these same vital sea lanes. During World War I, the naval role of the dominions was extremely limited. However, this changed in 1926, when at the Imperial Conference, the dominions were described as being members of the British Commonwealth of Nations. This reflected the growing mood for political and economic independence within the empire. From there it was a short step to the creation of more independent Commonwealth military and naval forces.

This was also a period of parsimony, when naval spending was cut, naval disarmament conferences were being held, and the size of national fleets was generally being reduced. This came to an end during the late 1930s, as international posturing and military and naval expansion by the totalitarian powers of Germany, Italy and Japan increased levels of international tension. Beginning with Australia, the Commonwealth navies were expanded, and their activities integrated with those of the Royal Navy to better safeguard the maritime arteries that bound the empire together. During the early years of World War II British naval resources were thinly stretched, and the Royal Navy relied on the naval support of its Commonwealth partners.

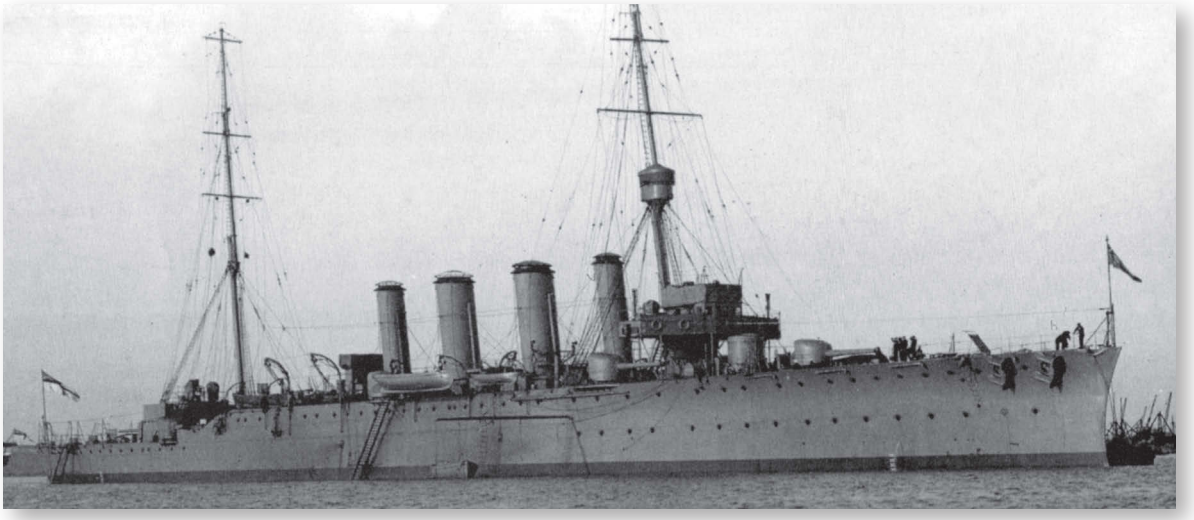
As a result, during the war the navies of Australia, New Zealand and Canada played a significant role in the conflict. Commonwealth cruisers saw action far from home – in the Atlantic, the Indian Ocean and the Mediterranean – and eventually the three fleets became increasingly involved in the war in the Pacific. It was there, amid the islands of the East Indies, the Solomons, the Philippines and the Japanese Ryukyu Islands that these Commonwealth warships would face their greatest challenge. Several of them were lost in action, while all were damaged at some point in their wartime careers. All of them however, would play their part in the ultimate victory of the Allies, both in Europe and the Pacific. While their contribution is largely forgotten beyond the shores of their home countries, the wartime efforts of these Commonwealth ships and men is well worth celebrating. If this small book goes some way to achieving this, then it will have fulfilled its purpose.

DOMINION NAVIES

During World War II, the terms Dominion navies and Commonwealth navies were both used in official reports and documents by the British Admiralty, the Royal Navy and the Royal Australian Navy (RAN) alike. Technically, dominion navies referred to warships operated by the British Empire's dominions. During the war years these were Australia, Canada, New Zealand, Newfoundland, South Africa and the Republic of Ireland. India, Pakistan and Ceylon only became dominions in 1947–48. Newfoundland was directly governed by Britain until it became a province of Canada in 1949. The British Commonwealth of Nations included these dominions, as well as other colonies and territories, so technically both terms are equally valid. However, it can be argued that the title of this book should actually refer to 'Dominion Cruisers', as no other Commonwealth state or territory maintained warships of that size during World War II.

Of these dominions, Australia, Canada and New Zealand included cruisers in their wartime fleets. However, even here the nomenclature is confusing, as New Zealand only established its own navy in 1942, even though there was a New Zealand Division of the Royal Navy. The South African Navy was virtually non-existent before World War II, and while it expanded during the conflict, it never operated warships as large as cruisers. The Irish Republic maintained a few small craft to police its inshore fishing grounds, and while its Marine and Coastwatching Service expanded during the war, it remained a small inshore protection force, rather than a seagoing naval force. Besides, unlike the other dominions, Ireland remained neutral during World War II, and so its naval vessels played no part in the conflict.

It is worth mentioning another Commonwealth navy. During the British Raj (1858–1947) the maritime defence of India was for the most part left in the hands of the Royal Navy. In 1857 though, Her Majesty's Indian Navy was established to assist the Royal Navy in Indian waters, and it maintained a small number of its own patrol vessels. By the early 20th century this had evolved into the Royal Indian Marine. During World War I this force carried out minesweeping operations in Indian waters, and on the sea route between India and the Suez Canal. In 1934 it became the Royal Indian Navy (RIN). During World War II the RIN was expanded, and operated under the control of the British Admiralty. However, its fleet consisted mainly of small vessels.



During World War I, the newly formed Royal Australian Navy consisted of a battlecruiser, three light cruisers, six destroyers and three submarines. The original HMAS *Sydney* pictured here was a Chatham class light cruiser, which won renown in 1914 following her destruction of the German light cruiser *Emden*.

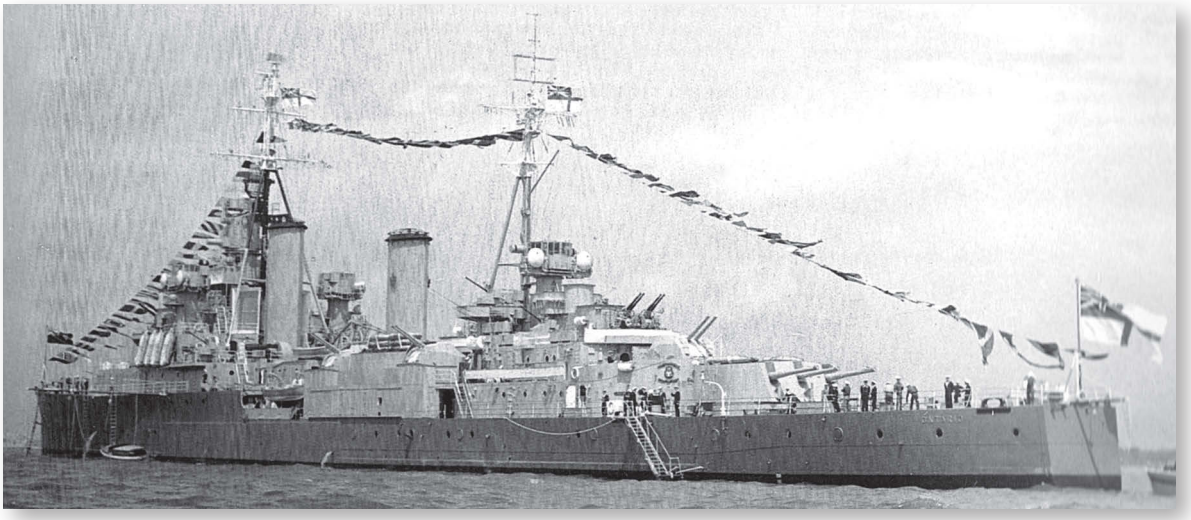
It was not until 1946 that the RIN acquired its first cruiser – the Leander class vessel HMNZS *Achilles*. She was renamed INS *Delhi* in 1948. By then India had acquired its independence. In 1947, on independence, India became a British dominion, and only became the Republic of India in 1950. However, she remained part of the British Commonwealth (now just the Commonwealth).

The foundation of the larger Commonwealth naval forces can be traced back to the years before the outbreak of World War I. The impetus for its foundation was two-fold. The first was the realization in 1909 that Great Britain was in danger of losing the naval arms race with Imperial Germany. This led to the offer of financial assistance to the Admiralty from Australia and Canada, or alternatively the creation of Dominion naval forces, capable of supporting the Royal Navy in time of war. At the time both Australia and Canada maintained small naval forces for the purposes of fishery protection, coastal defence and maritime policing. At the Imperial Conference held in London in 1909, the governments of both dominions expressed their willingness to create their own seagoing navies.

The Royal Canadian Navy

In 1910 the Canadian government passed the Naval Service Act, which formally established a Canadian navy. Until then the only non-British warships in Canadian waters belonged to the dominion's small Marine and Fisheries department. It was felt that this navy should consist of at least one heavy cruiser, four light (or protected) cruisers and six destroyers. This force though had to be built. To get it started, the British Admiralty lent the Canadians the old cruisers *Niobe* and *Rainbow*, to allow the Canadians to train sailors in the operation of larger vessels. In August 1911 King George V approved the appellation 'Royal' to its title, and the Royal Canadian Navy (RCN) was born. However, a change of government in Canada meant that the ambitious plans for the fleet were abandoned, and instead the RCN was limited to just the two cruisers, two patrol vessels and two submarines.

During World War I the RCN supported the Royal Navy as best it could, patrolling home waters, and carrying out limited anti-submarine patrols. By the end of the conflict though, the two cruisers and the two submarines had

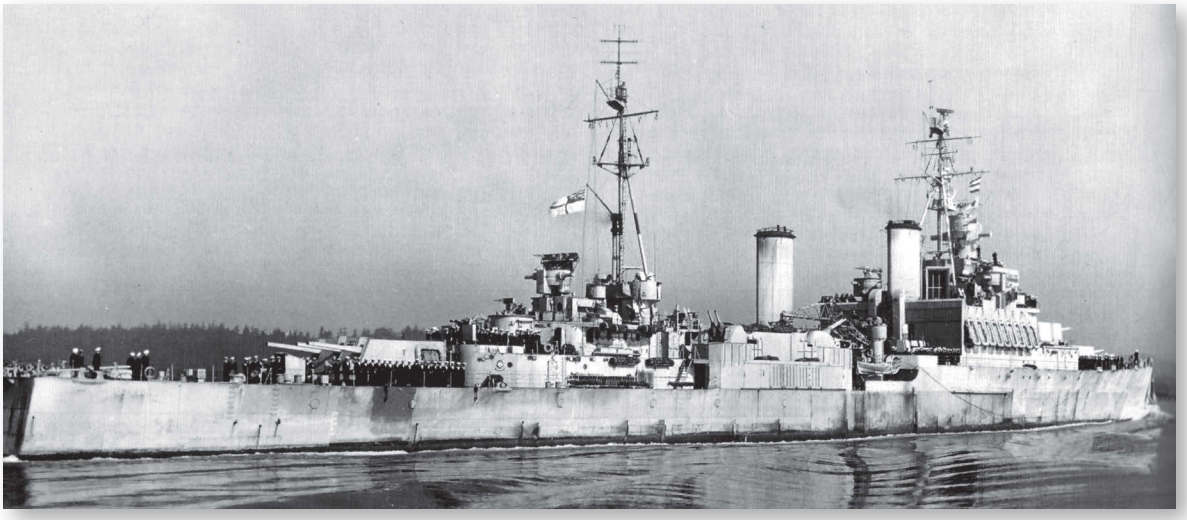


The Uganda class light cruiser *Uganda* was commissioned into the Royal Navy in January 1943, but was badly damaged off Salerno. After being repaired she was transferred to the Royal Canadian Navy. *Uganda* and her two sisters were effectively modified Fiji class vessels, boasting a better array of anti-aircraft weapons than their Fiji (or Colony) class counterparts.

been withdrawn from active service, and the remaining two patrol boats were earmarked for decommissioning. In 1920 the Royal Navy gave the RCN the Arethusa class light cruiser *Aurora* to replace *Niobe* and *Rainbow*, as well as two destroyers. However, post-war budget cuts led to *Aurora* being decommissioned in 1922. The Royal Navy replaced the destroyers during the late 1920s, but it was the early 1930s before the fleet began to expand again, after a decade of neglect. In 1931 two RCN destroyers were completed in Britain, and commissioned into the fleet – the first warships built specifically for it. Others would follow. By the outbreak of World War II the RCN operated a small fleet of six River class destroyers, five minesweepers and two training vessels. This force was divided between its two bases at Halifax, Nova Scotia in the east, and Victoria, British Columbia in the west.

During the war this small force expanded steadily, as the Canadians took on an increasing responsibility for the protection of Atlantic convoys. The entry of Japan into the war in December 1941 also raised the possibility of a Japanese attack on Canada's Pacific coast. However, the battle of the Atlantic remained the primary focus for the Canadian fleet. This reflected the type of ships that were transferred into Canadian service. For the most part these were destroyers, destroyer escorts, frigates and corvettes. The result was that the RCN took over control of convoy protection in the western sector of the North Atlantic, covering the all-important convoy routes between Halifax and Britain's Western Approaches. However, despite boasting the third largest navy in the world by the end of the conflict, the fleet only contained two warships of cruiser size or above.

The first of these to enter service was the Fiji class light cruiser *Uganda*. Commissioned into the Royal Navy in early 1943, the cruiser served in the Atlantic and the Mediterranean, before being badly damaged that September. She was sent to Charleston, South Carolina for repairs, and while she was there the Admiralty decided to transfer her into the RCN. She was duly commissioned as the HMCS *Uganda* in October 1944, and was sent west to serve alongside the British Pacific Fleet. Meanwhile, a Minotaur class light cruiser was nearing completion in Belfast, and was also transferred to the RCN in July 1944. She was commissioned into the Canadian fleet in May 1945 as HMCS *Ontario*. While this was after the Allied victory in

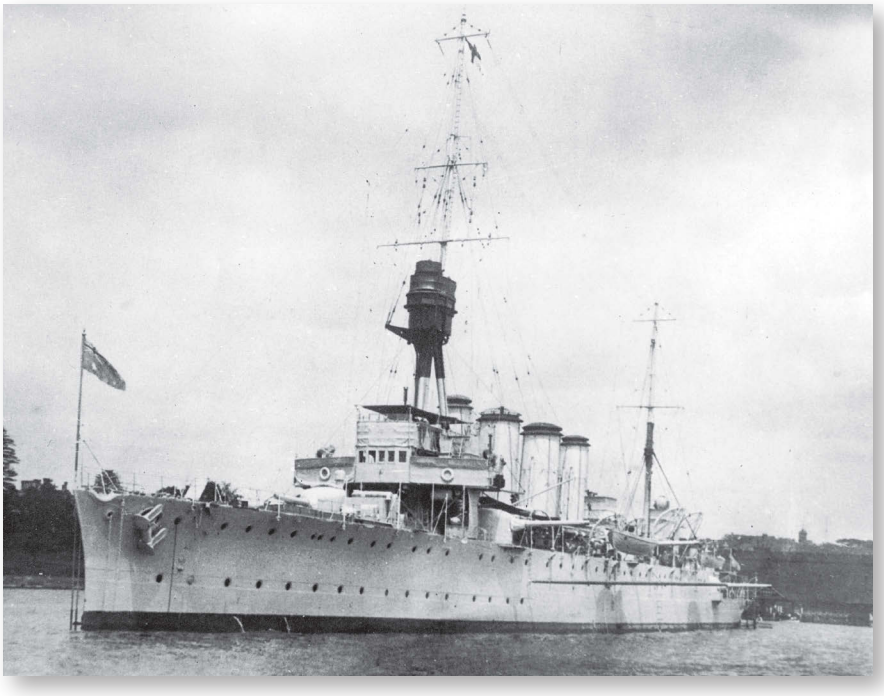


The modified Fiji class (or Uganda class) light cruiser HMCS *Uganda* carried nine 6in guns, in three triple turrets. This was one turret less than the vessels of the original Fiji class – the space it would have occupied was used to house an additional close-range quadruple 'pom-pom' instead.

Europe, Britain and the Commonwealth were still at war with Japan. Consequently she was sent to the Pacific, but arrived there too late to take part in hostilities. The two cruisers *Uganda* and *Ontario* might not have had a particularly active wartime career in Canadian service, but both would remain with the RCN for another quarter of a century.

The Royal Australian Navy

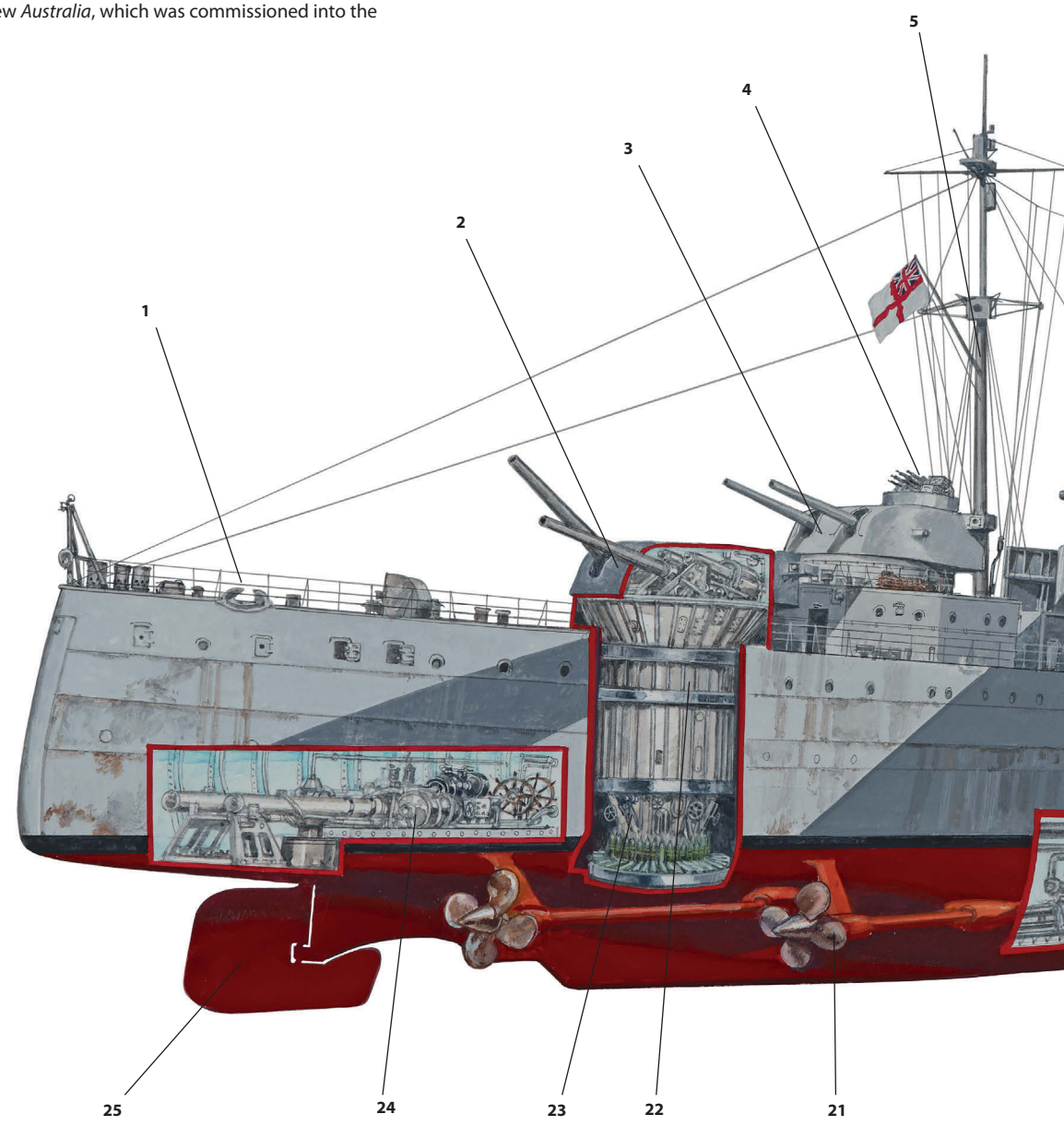
In 1901 the six self-governing colonies in Australia were federated, and their small naval detachments were amalgamated. After some deliberation, it was decided to create a naval force that could protect Australian waters, but which would also be capable of operating beyond home waters, serving alongside the Royal Navy. In 1909, its future strength was set at one



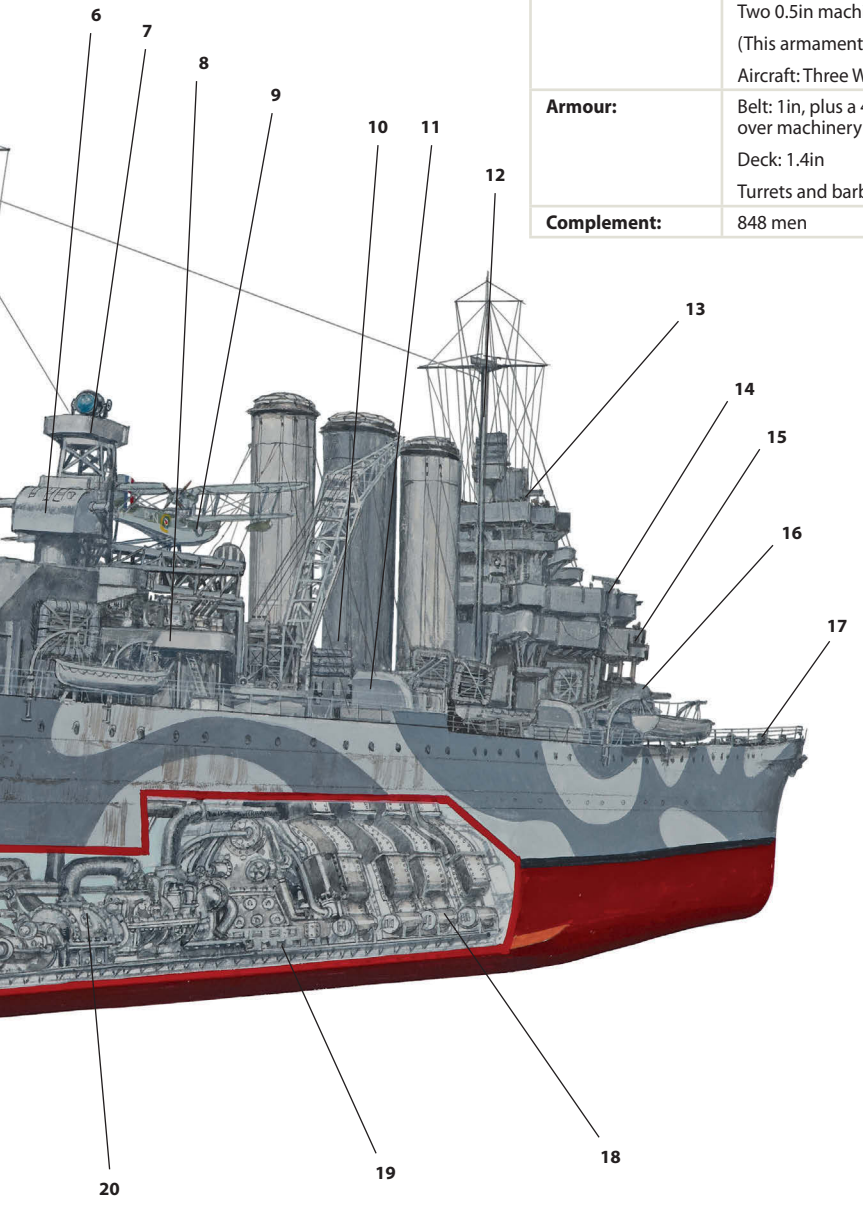
During World War I, the Town class light cruiser HMAS *Melbourne* formed part of the Royal Australian Navy, and saw service with the British Grand Fleet. She remained in service with the RAN until 1928, when she was decommissioned, and her crew transferred to the brand new cruiser HMAS *Australia*. Effectively she was used as a training ship, for the crew of the more modern cruisers due to enter service with the Australian fleet.

A HMAS *AUSTRALIA*

HMAS *Australia* was a County type cruiser of the Kent class, and a sister ship of the *Canberra*. She was the second warship to bear the name – the first being the Indefatigable class battlecruiser that became the flagship of the Royal Australian Navy when she was commissioned in 1913. The first *Australia* was decommissioned in 1923, in accordance with the terms of the Washington Naval Treaty. The same treaty saw the building of what became known as Treaty cruisers – large heavy cruisers designed primarily for the protection of the sea lanes. One of these was the new *Australia*, which was commissioned into the RAN in 1928. She became the new flagship of the Australian fleet, and in early 1942 was named as the flagship of the ANZAC Squadron, charged with defending Australia from invasion. She went on to support Allied operations in the South Pacific, off Guadalcanal, New Guinea and the Philippines. She survived the war, and was decommissioned in 1954. In this cutaway view she bears the colour scheme she wore in early 1942, while she served as the flagship of the ANZAC Squadron based at Noumea in the South Pacific.



Technical Data	
Displacement:	10,240 tons (standard), 14,253 tons (fully laden)
Dimensions:	Length: 630ft (192.1m) overall Beam: 68ft 3in (20.8m) Draught: 16ft 3in (5m) mean
Propulsion:	Eight Admiralty boilers, four Brown-Curtis turbines, driving four propeller shafts, generating 80,000shp
Maximum speed:	31.5 knots
Range:	9,500 nautical miles at 12 knots
Armament (1939):	Eight 8in Mark VIII guns in four twin turrets Eight 4in Mark V QF guns in four twin mountings One quadruple 2-pdr 'pom-pom' Eight 21in Mark VIII torpedoes in two four-tube launchers Two 0.5in machine gun mountings (This armament was modified slightly during her career.) Aircraft: Three Walrus seaplanes with one fixed catapult
Armour:	Belt: 1in, plus a 4in protected box protecting magazines, and 4.5in over machinery spaces Deck: 1.4in Turrets and barbettes: 1in
Complement:	848 men



KEY

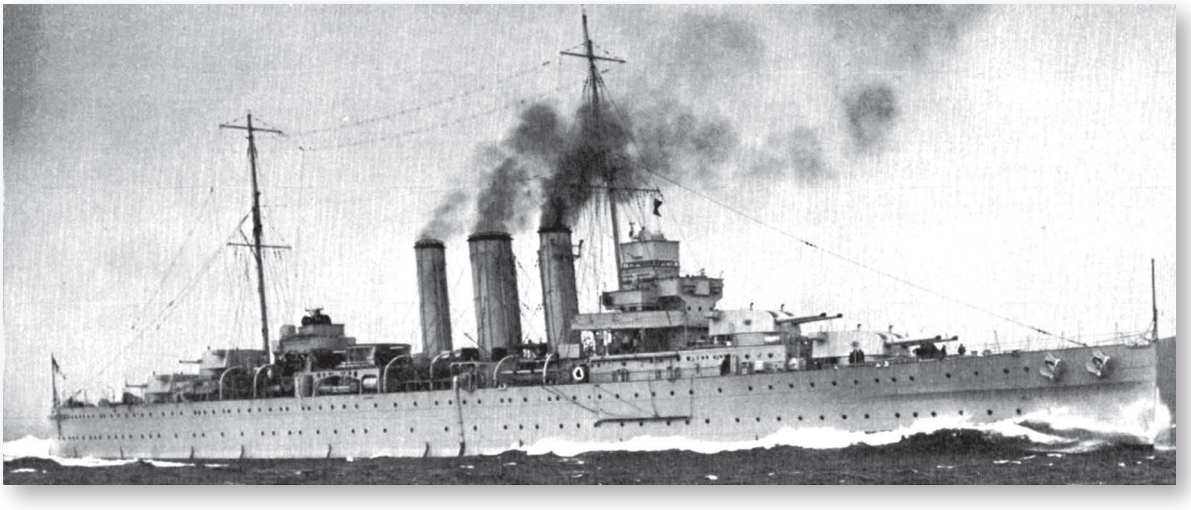
1. Quarterdeck
2. Y Turret (two 8-inch Mark VIII guns in twin turret)
3. X Turret (this turret was removed in February 1945)
4. Light anti-aircraft mounting (one of two)
5. Mainmast
6. After gunnery direction position
7. Searchlight platform
8. Quadruple 2-pounder pom-pom (one of two)
9. Catapult and Supermarine Walrus
10. Crane (one of two)
11. Two 4-inch Mark V guns in twin turret (one of four)
12. Foremast
13. Main gunnery direction position
14. Light anti-aircraft mounting (one of two)
15. Bridge
16. A and B turrets
17. Forecastle
18. Boiler room (one of four)
19. Oil tanks
20. Engine room (one of two)
21. Propeller (one of four)
22. Turret barbette
23. Main magazine (one of four)
24. Steering gear compartment
25. Rudder

battlecruiser, three light cruisers, six destroyers and three submarines, plus whatever smaller vessels it required to carry out its dual role. On 10 July 1911 the Royal Australian Navy (RAN) was officially formed by a decree signed by King George V. The Australian government then set about building up its nascent fleet.

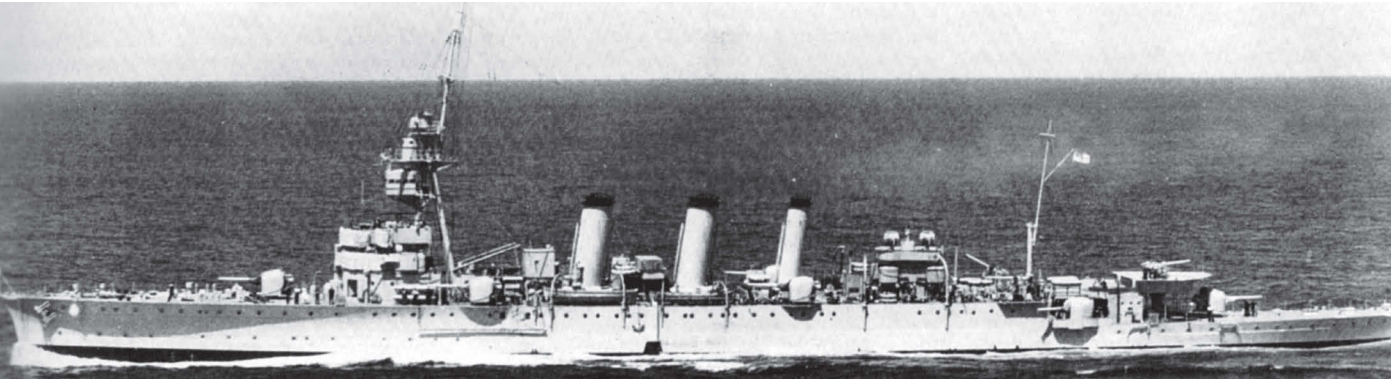
By the start of World War I, the RAN consisted of the Indefatigable class battlecruiser *Australia*, the light cruisers *Encounter, Melbourne* and *Sydney*, three River class torpedo boat destroyers and two E class submarines. In addition, another light cruiser, the *Pioneer*, was used as a training ship. The two Chatham class light cruisers *Melbourne* and *Sydney* had both been built in Britain, and transferred to the RAN in 1913. However, that same year their sister ship *Brisbane* was laid down in HMA Naval Dockyard on Cockatoo Island in Sydney and entered service in October 1916. Before the war, the Royal Navy had maintained a small Australian Squadron, to defend Australian and New Zealand waters. The creation of a dedicated Australian Navy allowed the more useful elements of this squadron to return home or to be deployed elsewhere. This in turn helped reinforce the British Grand Fleet, which was ranged against its German opponents across the North Sea.

During the war the RAN was placed under control of the British Admiralty, and fulfilled its dual role with notable professionalism. Its first mission was to help capture Germany's colonies in the Pacific, and to protect Australia and New Zealand from the ships of the German East Asia Squadron. Once this was achieved, several Australian warships were sent to the Mediterranean, to reinforce the Royal Navy there. The exception was the battlecruiser *Australia*, which eventually joined the Grand Fleet in Scapa Flow. This small naval force received a number of reinforcements during the war or immediately afterwards, but the fleet was soon overtaken by international events beyond Australia's control.

When the war ended the Royal Navy – including the ships of Britain's dominions – was the largest naval force in the world. The end of hostilities also meant the end of any serious naval threat. At the same time Britain and its former naval allies had to begin dealing with the vast war debts accrued during the conflict. This led to the institution of naval disarmament talks, which in turn resulted in the Washington Naval Treaty of 1922, which limited the size of existing fleets and the building of new warships. Warships owned



Before the outbreak of war, *Canberra* saw service in home waters and on the China Station, when she carried the colour scheme shown here – light grey hull and upper works, and tan funnels. *Australia* and *Canberra* were easily recognizable from British Kent Class cruisers owing to their especially high funnels.



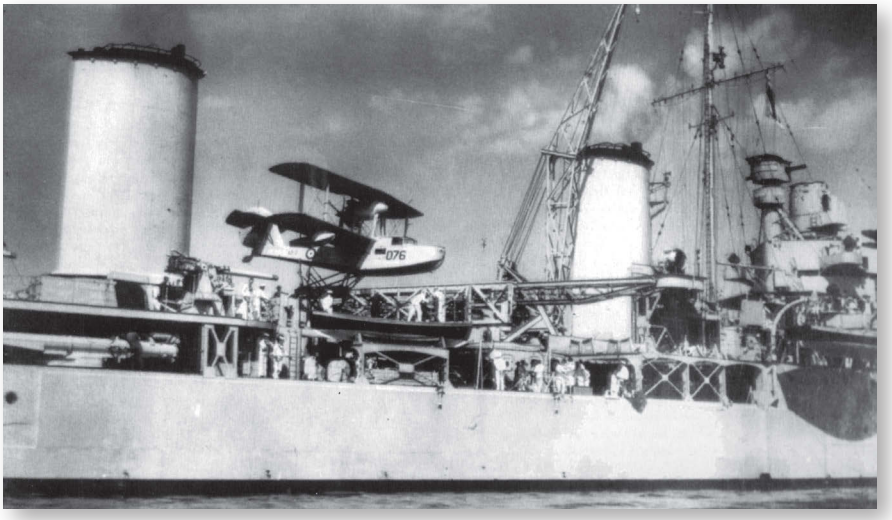
When the war began, HMAS *Adelaide* was the last remaining cruiser of the Birmingham class. Essentially she was obsolete when she entered service in 1922, but she was extensively refitted, and during the conflict she proved useful as a convoy escort and patrol ship.

and operated by the British dominions were grouped together with Great Britain when it came to setting quotas on fleet sizes and warship building. This in turn meant that warships which were not really needed, or were near the end of their useful lives, tended to be scrapped in order to free up quota allowances for more modern vessels.

The impact on the RAN was fairly immediate. In December 1921 the battlecruiser *Australia* was decommissioned, and three years later she was scuttled, to conform to the terms of the treaty. The older Pelorus class light cruisers *Pioneer* and *Psyche* had already been decommissioned, and in 1923 the *Encounter* became the depot ship *Penguin*. She was finally scrapped six years later. Other smaller warships and submarines were also decommissioned so that, by the mid-1920s, the only major units in the fleet were the three Chatham class light cruisers *Brisbane, Melbourne* and *Sydney*. Even they were not immune, and two of them were earmarked for disposal, as soon as replacement cruisers could be built.

To partially make up for these losses, the modified Chatham class light cruiser *Adelaide* entered service in 1922. She had actually been laid down in

The heavy cruiser HMAS *Australia*, as she appeared shortly before the outbreak of war. She underwent a major refit in 1938–39, when her protection and anti-aircraft armament were both improved.

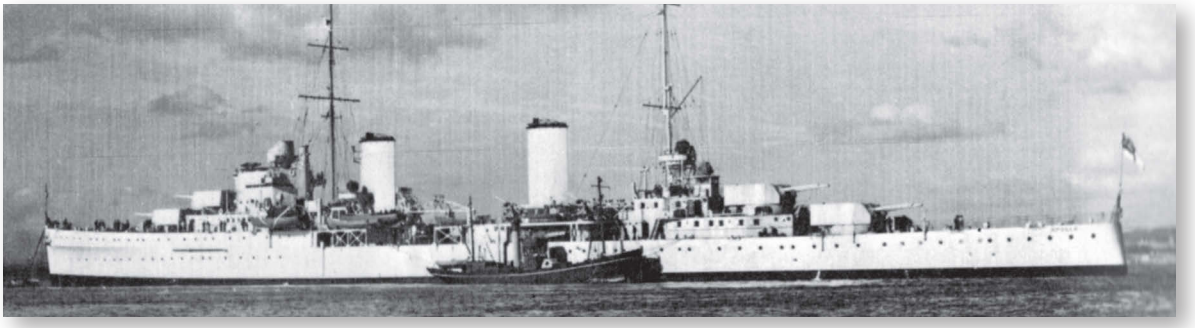


The Perth class light cruisers were fitted with 53ft trainable catapults, designed to be used with the Supermarine Walrus seaplane. These gave the cruisers their own intrinsic search and gunnery direction capability, but they also took up considerable deck space, and were a fire hazard. This Walrus was carried on HMAS *Sydney*.

HMAS *Perth*, seen here in August 1939, during a visit to New York, as part of the celebrations surrounding the World Trade Fair. She retained this overall light grey colour scheme (Admiralty 507c) until December 1940, when she was repainted in the Alexandria pattern scheme shown in Plate E.

Sydney in 1915, but problems with the supply of parts, which could not be manufactured in Australia, meant she took seven years to build. As a result *Adelaide* earned the nickname '*Longdelayed*'. The plan to replace *Melbourne* and *Sydney* was also postponed for a time, as financial constraints imposed upon the British Admiralty delayed the building of the cruisers earmarked to replace them. According to the terms of the Washington Naval Treaty, new cruisers could carry guns with a bore of up to 8in. This encouraged this new breed of cruiser to carry larger guns. The first of this new Kent class, of what would become heavy cruisers, was laid down in British shipyards in late 1924. Work began on *Australia* and *Cumberland* – the ones earmarked for the RAN – the following summer.

These ships were considerably more powerful than the two modified Chatham class light cruisers they were designed to replace. They were also better suited to the task of protecting Australia's long sea lanes across the Pacific or the Indian Ocean. The two cruisers eventually entered service in 1928, at the same time as the two older cruisers were decommissioned. In fact, the crew of the old light cruisers were transferred to the new heavy ones – a practice that the RAN would repeat when other more modern cruisers

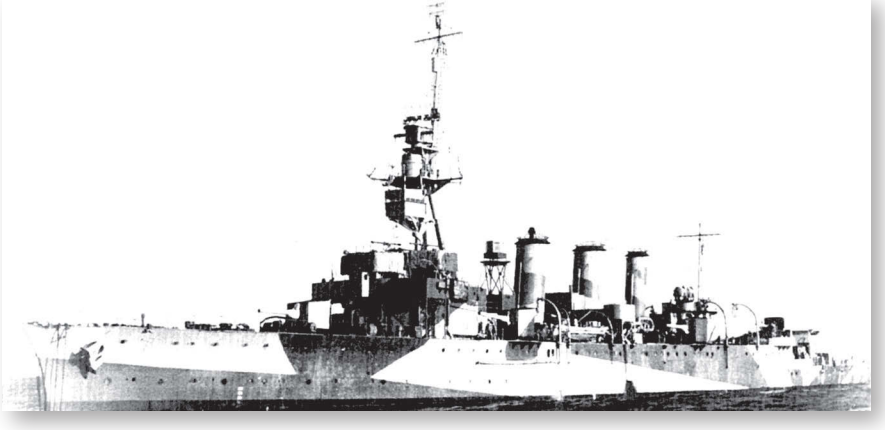


HMAS *Hobart* – one of three Australian modified Leander (or Perth) class cruisers – began her career as the Royal Naval light cruiser HMS *Apollo*, and was renamed following her transfer in September 1938. Here she is pictured in Australian waters shortly after her transfer, but before the outbreak of war.

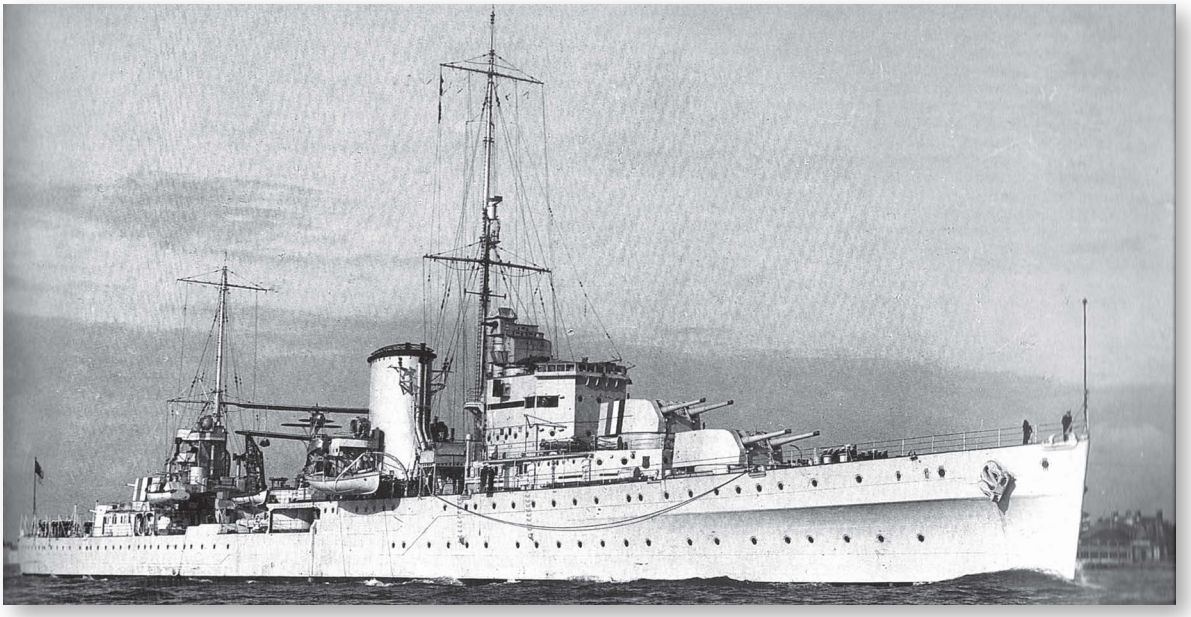
joined the fleet. This, however, was followed by a lengthy pause in the development of the Australian fleet, brought about by the financial instability following the Wall Street Crash and the resulting global depression. It would not be until the early 1930s that new cruisers would be laid down for the RAN, by which time the global political landscape had changed. As these ships were being built it became increasingly apparent that Australia might become involved in a new global conflict – one which might involve a direct threat to Australia itself.

This meant that the commissioning of the three Perth class light cruisers in 1936 came at a very opportune moment. *Hobart*, *Perth* and *Sydney* were originally designed for commerce protection, and although they lacked the superb range and seakeeping qualities of the larger Kent class, they were well-designed ships, and would soon prove their worth in battle. The only other cruiser to enter service with the RAN during the war was the *Shropshire*, a London class heavy cruiser that was similar to the Kent class, which included *Australia* and *Canberra*. She was transferred from the Royal Navy in 1943 to replace *Canberra*, which had been sunk in action. However, despite the loss of two of the three Perth class light cruisers during the winter of 1941–42, they were not replaced.

This meant that from 1943 onwards, the RAN actually had fewer cruisers than it had at the start of the war. However, upgrades of weapons, sensors and propulsion systems ensured those that remained retained their usefulness until the very end of the conflict. During this period the RAN served under a variety of commands. While serving in the Mediterranean or the Indian Ocean, it did so under British command. After Japan declared war on the British Empire, a joint Australian and New Zealand naval command was



During the war HMAS *Adelaide* was modified – her armament was reduced, but radar was fitted as well as a modern fire control system. This extended her usefulness, and she remained in service throughout the war. This shows *Adelaide* as she appeared in late 1942, when she sank a German blockade runner in the Indian Ocean.



HMS *Achilles* of the Royal Navy's New Zealand Division, as she looked at the start of the war. In December 1939, during the battle of the River Plate, she wore this overall mid-grey colour scheme, but was repainted after her subsequent return to New Zealand.

established – the ANZAC Squadron – to coordinate the defence of the home islands. However, in April 1942 it was transferred to American control, forming part of the South West Pacific Area command. This made sense, as the dominant Allied naval power in the region was the US Navy. The majority of Australian cruisers still in operation then transferred to the British Pacific Fleet after its formation in November 1944.

The Royal New Zealand Navy

Before 1913, the coastline and waters of New Zealand were officially protected by the Royal Navy's Australian Squadron, based in Sydney. Both Australia and New Zealand paid Britain a subsidy, which helped fund this permanent naval squadron in their home waters. In theory, an additional Australasian Auxiliary Squadron comprising Australian and New Zealand warships would operate alongside the Royal Naval force. In practice, however, this dominion-run squadron consisted of just a handful of patrol boats, as neither Australia nor New Zealand had the trained personnel to crew a larger force. Nevertheless, in 1907 the New Zealand Marine Department purchased a training ship to help overcome this problem.

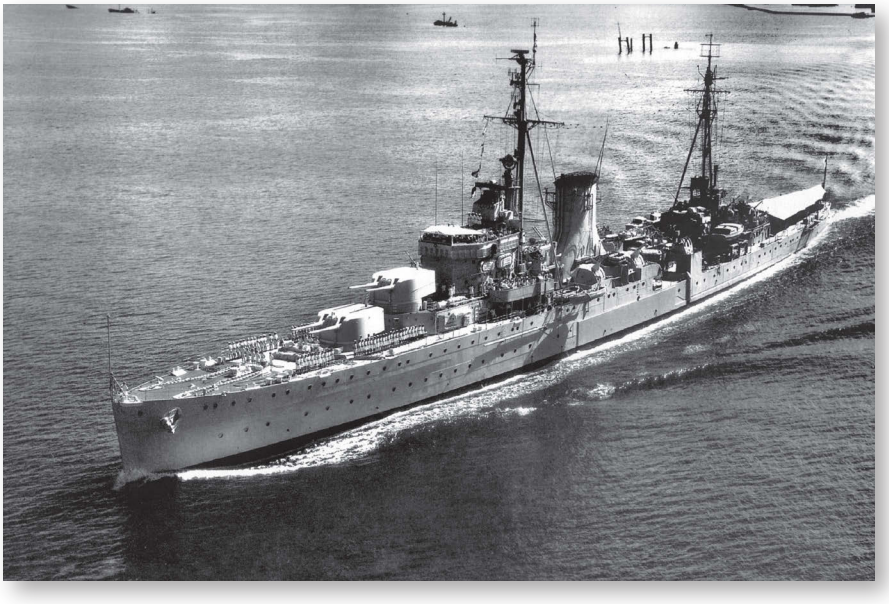
Two years later, during the naval arms race that preceded the outbreak of World War I, the New Zealand government offered to pay for the building of a capital ship, to augment the strength of the Royal Navy. The Indefatigable class battlecruiser HMS *New Zealand* duly entered service in 1912, but unlike her sister ship, *Australia*, she spent very little time in the waters of the southern hemisphere. Instead she formed part of the British Grand Fleet, and saw action at the battle of Jutland (1916). By then though, New Zealand had been granted leave to form a fleet of her own. The Naval Defence Act of 1913 approved by the British parliament came about through the efforts of the New Zealand Minister of Defence, who had spent much of the previous year lobbying in favour of this legislation.

The Act allowed the formation of a body called New Zealand Naval Forces (NZNF), which would adopt responsibility for the coastal defence of

New Zealand, and which would come under Royal Naval control in time of war. In fact, for administrative purposes it formed part of the Royal Navy's China Station command. At first the fledgling NZNF had only one warship – the Pearl class light cruiser *Philomel*, which in 1914 was presented to the force by the Royal Navy. Manned largely by New Zealanders, the old cruiser was involved in New Zealand's capture of the German island colony of Samoa, and went on to see action in the Middle Eastern theatre. In 1917 she returned to Wellington, where she served as a training and depot ship for a small flotilla of NZNF coastal minesweepers – vessels on loan from the Royal Navy.

Philomel was decommissioned in 1921 and spent the next two decades as a harbour-bound training ship in Auckland. Hundreds of New Zealand seamen were trained on board, earning the old cruiser the New Zealand nickname 'Cradle of the Navy'. A year later the *New Zealand* was also decommissioned as part of the reduction of naval forces that occurred at the same time as the negotiation of the Washington Naval Treaty. One of the battlecruiser's last duties was to transport Admiral Jellicoe on a tour of the dominions, and his report on the naval defence of Australia and New Zealand supported the establishment of a joint Antipodean naval force, based in the Pacific. The first tentative steps towards this took place in 1921, when the NZNF was replaced by the New Zealand Division of the Royal Navy.

Its first ship was the Town class cruiser HMS *Chatham*. From 1920–24 she was crewed by men of the New Zealand Division, as was her successor HMS *Dunedin*, a D class light cruiser. *Dunedin* remained in service with the New Zealand Division from 1924 until 1937. In 1926 she was joined by her sister ship *Diomede*, which was also largely crewed by New Zealanders from 1926 until 1936. Both of these D class cruisers had been ordered during World War I, but entered service after the end of hostilities. This meant that they were more modern than their wartime predecessors – cruisers such as *Chatham*. Both *Dunedin* and *Diomede*, however, were nearing the end of their scheduled lives by the early 1930s. This meant they had to be replaced, and so the Admiralty earmarked two new Leander class light cruisers to succeed them.



The Leander class light cruiser HMS *Achilles* earned worldwide fame in December 1939 when she played a prominent part in the battle of the River Plate. At the time of the battle she was crewed by the Royal Navy's New Zealand Division. She officially became HMNZS *Achilles* in September 1941, after the creation of the Royal New Zealand Navy. In this pre-war photograph she carries the light grey paint scheme she carried during the battle.

Like her sister ship *Black Prince*, the modified Dido class cruiser *Bellona* served in the Royal Navy during the war, but after hostilities ended she was transferred to the Royal New Zealand Navy. She spent a decade in New Zealand service.

These brand new vessels – the Leander class light cruisers *Achilles* and *Leander* – entered service in 1936 and 1937 respectively. Both were largely manned by men of the New Zealand Division. At the battle of the River Plate (1939), it is estimated that 60 per cent of the ship's company of *Achilles* were New Zealanders. This reflects both the watering down of the dominion nature of these ships during the war, and the way in which the New Zealanders were closely integrated into the Royal Navy. At the same time the division operated several other vessels – two escort sloops, a minesweeper and a survey vessel, as well as smaller harbour craft. In 1939 this small group of ships found themselves at war, although only the cruisers were able to participate in operations far beyond New Zealand territorial waters.

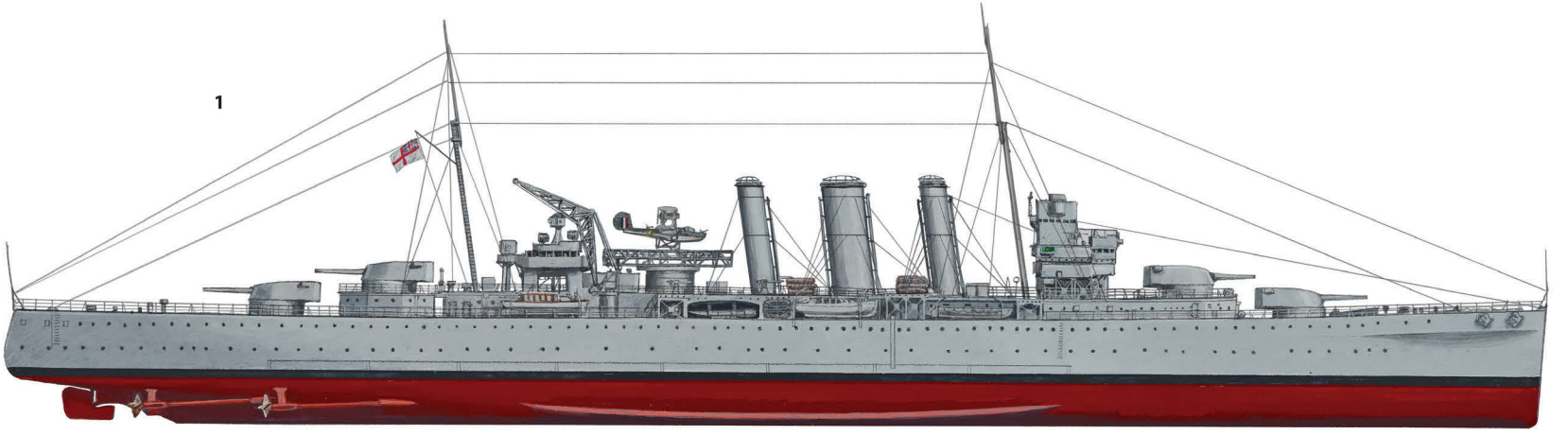
B

THE ROYAL AUSTRALIAN NAVY: HEAVY CRUISERS

1: HMAS *Canberra*. The *Australia* and her sister ship *Canberra* were Kent class heavy cruisers – a sub-group of the larger County class. When they entered service in 1928 they were identical to the five British ships of the Kent class, apart from the type of torpedoes they carried in their two deck-level launchers. However, both were altered slightly during the decade before the outbreak of war, and during their wartime careers. Both underwent major refits – *Canberra* underwent hers in Sydney in early 1942 – during which she had her secondary battery increased from four to eight single-mounted 4in guns, and had two 8-barrelled 'pom-poms' added. More importantly she was fitted with surface search and air warning radars. This profile view of *Canberra* shows her as she looked when she emerged from this refit. She maintained this appearance until August 1942, when she was sunk off Guadalcanal, during the battle of Savo Island.

2: HMAS *Shropshire*. Due to the naval agreement between Great Britain and Australia, the Admiralty had to replace *Canberra* in order to maintain the cruiser strength of the Royal Australian Navy. So in September HMS *Shropshire*, a London class heavy cruiser, was transferred to Australian service. The London class was another sub-group of the larger County class, and therefore her general appearance was similar to *Canberra* and *Australia*. Despite attempts to change her name it was deemed bad luck to do so, and so the cruiser retained her 'un-Australian' name throughout her career. Before her transfer *Shropshire* underwent a refit in Chatham, and so it was June 1943 before she was commissioned into Australian service. This plate shows her appearance when she first entered Australian service. She retained this complex four-colour camouflage scheme.

1



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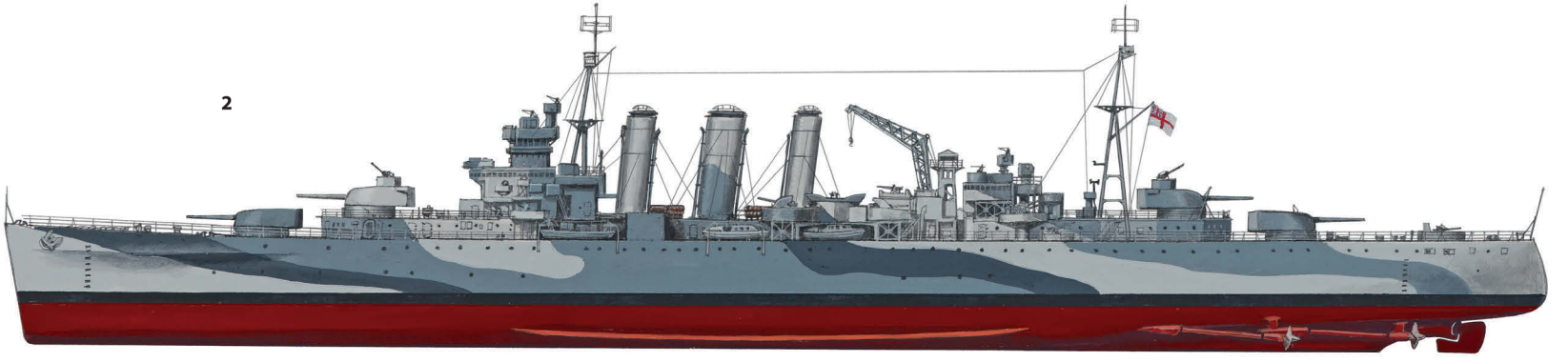
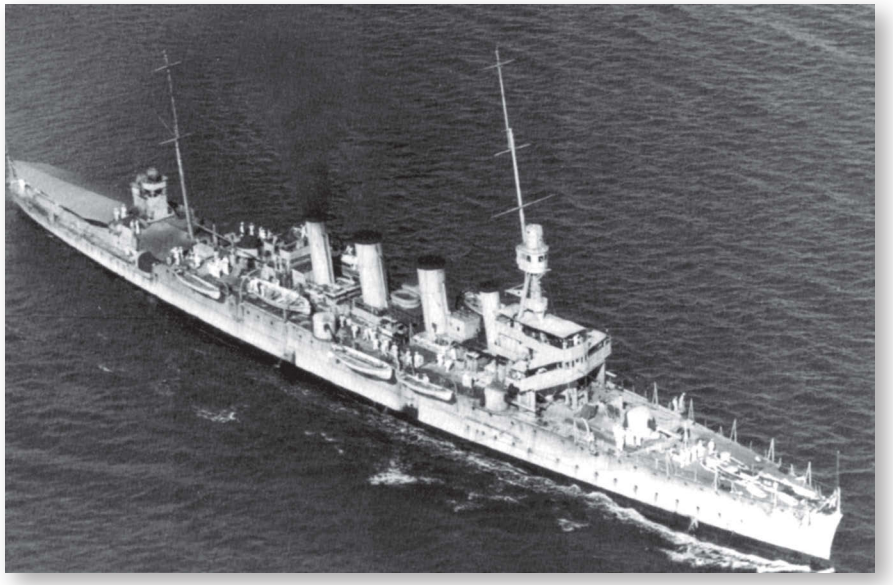




HMAS *Brisbane* was a Chatham class light cruiser and the sister ship of the *Sydney* and *Melbourne*, which also served in the Royal Australian Navy during World War I. In the inter-war years she became a training ship, used to coach Australian sailors in the operation of cruiser-sized ships. When she was decommissioned in 1935 the majority of her ship's company transferred to the new HMAS *Sydney*, which had just been completed.

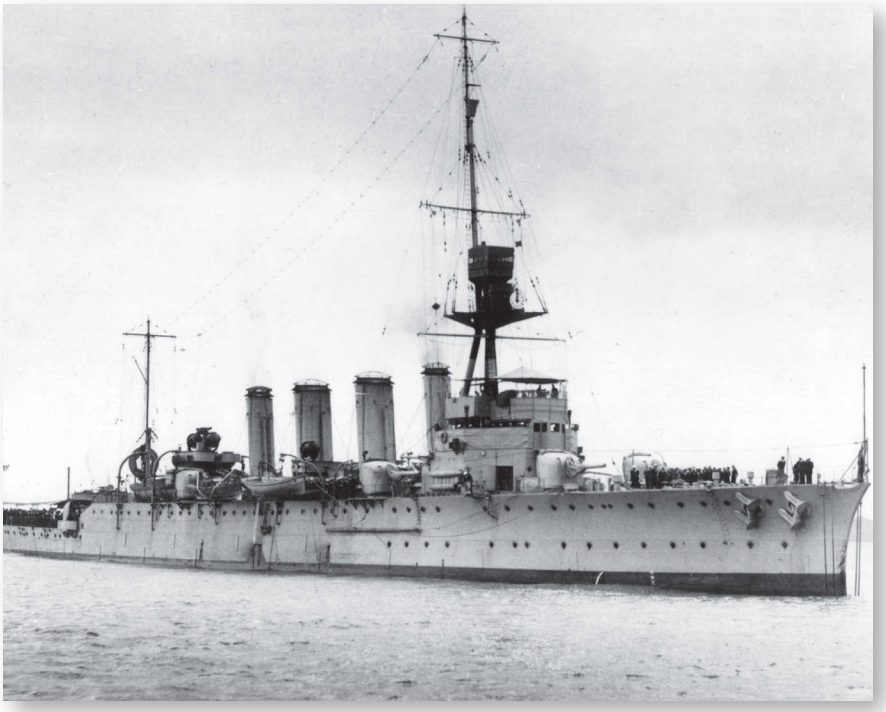
In 1941, the decision was made to make the New Zealand Division a fleet in its own right, rather than an adjunct of the Royal Navy. Consequently, on 1 October 1941 the Royal New Zealand Navy (RNZN) was created by royal decree. The division's ships then in service, including *Achilles* and *Leander* duly changed their prefix from 'HMS' to 'HMNZS'. So, almost three decades after Canada and Australia, a third dominion fleet came into being. As the war progressed the RNZN expanded, as its ships operated in support of the Royal Navy and other Allied forces in the Atlantic, the Indian Ocean, the Mediterranean and the South Pacific. *Achilles* took part in the battle of the River Plate, before sailing home to hunt German raiders in the Pacific. *Leander* served in the Pacific during the first years of the war, but between 1941 and 1943 she operated as part of the British Mediterranean Fleet.

New Zealand warships also became part of the ANZAC Squadron, the South West Pacific Command, and would serve in both the US 7th Fleet and the British Pacific Fleet. The two Leander class light cruisers were eventually reinforced. In January 1943 *Achilles* was badly damaged while taking part in the fighting in the South Pacific. Consequently, in September the Royal Navy lent the Fiji class light cruiser *Gambia* to the RNZN to act as a replacement. Finally, the two Dido class light cruisers *Bellona* and *Black Prince* were also earmarked for transfer from the Royal Navy to the RNZN, but they were not commissioned into New Zealand service until after the war. At the same time – in 1946 – *Achilles* was transferred from the RNZN to the Royal Indian Navy.

ROYAL AUSTRALIAN NAVY CRUISERS

Town class

During World War I the Royal Australian Navy operated three light cruisers of the Chatham class, a sub-group of the larger Town class. Two of these ships, *Melbourne* and *Sydney*, were decommissioned and disposed of in 1928 when the new Kent class heavy cruisers entered service. By then another



Before her modernization in 1938–39, HMAS *Adelaide* was fitted with four funnels, but her forward stack was removed during this refit, when her propulsion system was extensively overhauled. The old-fashioned main armament configuration was also replaced by a more efficient form. However, she still remained what she was – an obsolete cruiser – and so was relegated to second-line duties during the war.This involved the removal of her coal-fired boilers, along with her forward funnel, the landing of one of her forecastle 6in guns, and the repositioning of the remaining one on her centreline. Her two 3in guns were replaced by three 4in anti-aircraft guns, together with a fire control director, and her submerged torpedo tubes were removed. Further wartime modifications were made to her anti-aircraft armament, and sensors were added. The result was a cruiser that would never match her modern counterparts, but would at least remain a useful asset to the Royal Australian Navy until the end of the war.

Town class light cruiser, HMAS *Adelaide*, had joined the fleet. She was a modified Chatham class vessel, one of four cruisers which made up the Birmingham class. The other three – *Birmingham*, *Lowestoft* and *Nottingham* – were all built in Britain, and were commissioned into the Royal Navy. The fourth cruiser was *Adelaide*, which was built in Sydney. Despite being a cruiser designed and laid down during the earlier conflict, *Adelaide* would remain in service with the RAN throughout World War II.

Name	Built	Laid Down	Launched	Completed	Fate
Adelaide	Cockatoo Island	20 November 1917	27 July 1918	4 August 1922	Disposed of, 1949

The Royal Navy's Town class cruisers, which included the Chatham and Birmingham sub-classes, were first designed during 1907 and 1908, when a dual role was envisaged for them – the policing of trade routes, and scouting ahead of the main battle fleet. These ships were designed as 'protected cruisers' which meant they carried light armour on a partial internal armoured deck to protect their vitals – magazines and machinery spaces – from long-range plunging fire. They also had a varying degree of belt armour protecting the hull sides around the same area from more direct enemy fire. By the time the Chatham class of six light cruisers was designed and built in 1912–13, the armoured deck had been reduced, and the belt armour thickened. It was felt that the threat posed by close-range fire from other cruisers was greater than the danger from long-range fire.

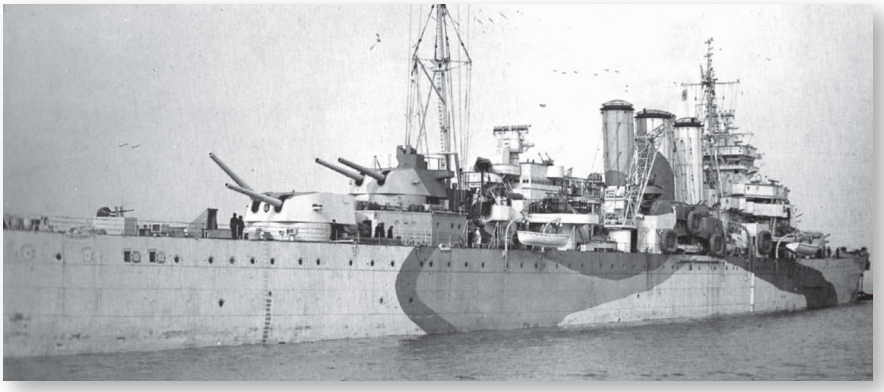
So, the Chathams were given an armoured belt 3in (76mm) thick around their vitals, tapering to 2½in (64mm) elsewhere. This ran for almost two-thirds of the length of the hull. By contrast, the deck armour was reduced to just ⅜in (9.8mm) for most of the length of the ship, but this increased to 1½in (38mm) aft, to protect the steering compartments. These Chathams

In this view of HMAS *Australia* her hull and superstructure are painted in Admiralty 507b mid-grey. It was early 1941 before a camouflage scheme was applied – a two tone dark and light grey pattern, which was still in place until the late summer of 1942.
Of the seven Kent class warships which were built, two of them were earmarked for service with the RAN. *Australia* and *Canberra* were virtually identical to their British sister ships – the only difference when they entered service was that they carried a different type of torpedo. Unlike the old Chatham class vessels they replaced, these heavy cruisers mounted a respectable anti-aircraft battery of four 4in Mark VIII guns in four twin turrets gave them a level of firepower commensurate with other modern cruisers being built by Japan. Both ships were built in Glasgow's Clydebank, and entered service in 1928. Like their British counterparts neither cruiser was equipped with an aircraft catapult, but these were added later – in 1935 for *Australia*, and in 1941 for *Canberra*.

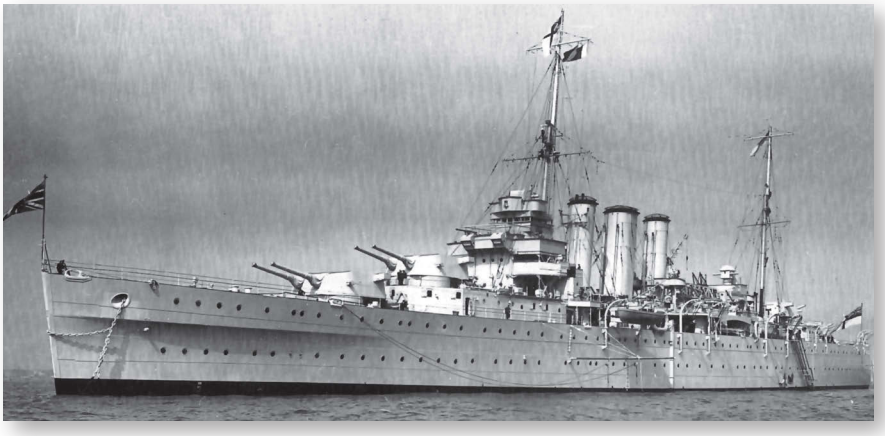
were also longer than the earlier Town class cruisers, to allow for the mounting of additional guns. *Adelaide* and the other cruisers of the Birmingham class were identical to the cruisers of the Chatham class, except they mounted two 6in guns on their forecastle, rather than just one. In the Chathams, two guns in the waist were expected to fire forward, but it was found the blast they produced made this impractical, for fear of damaging the bridge. The solution was to mount the extra gun on the forecastle instead.

The three British Birmingham class cruisers were all laid down during the summer of 1912, and were commissioned in early 1914. By contrast, *Adelaide* was only laid down after the start of the war, in late 1917. She was built at HMA Dockyard at Cockatoo Island in Sydney Harbour, but wartime delays in the supply of British-built parts meant it was 1918 before she was launched. By the time she was completed in August 1922 she was already considered obsolete. Her side-by-side forward guns, her submerged torpedo tubes and even her facility to be powered by either coal or fuel oil marked her as a warship from an earlier age. However, in 1938–39 she underwent an extensive modernization, designed to extend her useful life, at a time when the maritime threat to Australia and to the Empire was increasing.

The crew of HMAS *Canberra* – a photograph probably taken in the spring or summer of 1942. This photograph gives a good impression of the proportions of her main turrets. Each housed two 8in/50 Mark VIII guns, which had a maximum range of approximately 15 nautical miles.



In September 1942 the London class heavy cruiser HMS *Shropshire* was transferred to the Royal Australian Navy, to replace the *Canberra*, which was sunk off Guadalcanal the previous month. This photograph of her was taken in April 1942, while she was still in Royal Naval service. The camouflage scheme shown here was changed in the summer of 1943.



Before joining the Australian fleet, HMS *Shropshire* received additional light anti-aircraft guns and a suite of radars. This made her a more effective warship than HMAS *Canberra* – the cruiser she was sent to the Royal Australian Navy to replace.

County class

The heavy cruisers of the County class were built as a result of the Washington Naval Treaty (1922), where the limit for cruiser design was set at 10,000 tons, with a maximum gun calibre of 8in. The result was a 10,000-ton ship, designed primarily for trade protection, armed with eight 8in guns. Their relatively high freeboard increased their seaworthiness, and permitted ample fuel stowage space, both of which suited their assigned role. Armoured protection was poor though – a 1½in deck and a 1in belt protecting the ships' vitals meant that these ships were barely proof against the 6in guns carried by contemporary light cruisers. Still, with a top speed in excess of 30 knots, it was felt this was a sacrifice worth making. The County class of heavy cruisers was divided into three sub-classes, of which the Kent class of seven vessels was the first. These were followed by slightly modified versions, which formed the four warships of the London class, and the two of the Norfolk class.

Name	Built	Laid Down	Launched	Completed	Fate
Australia	John Brown, Clydebank	26 August 1925	17 March 1927	24 April 1928	Scrapped 1955
Canberra	John Brown, Clydebank	9 September 1925	31 May 1927	10 July 1928	Sunk in action, 9 August 1942

During 1938–39 *Australia* underwent a refit, bringing her into line with her British counterparts, which had been modified earlier in the decade. The thickness of *Australia*'s armoured belt protecting her machinery spaces was increased from 4in. Her single 4in guns were also replaced by twin mountings,

When they first entered service, two of the three Australian light cruisers of the Perth class carried a secondary armament of eight 4in Mark V guns, in four twin mountings. However, *Sydney* was equipped with the older array of four 4in guns in single mountings pictured here, mounted on a battery deck between the after funnel and the mainmast. She still carried these guns when she was lost in action.

directed by a HACS (high-angle control system). These guns were also installed on the main deck level, rather than the boat deck. A new catapult was fitted, allowing the carrying of three aircraft, although no hanger was provided for them. By contrast, *Canberra* retained her original configuration until after the start of the war.

Name	Built	Laid Down	Launched	Completed	Fate
Shropshire	Beardmore, Clydebank	24 February 1927	5 July 1928	12 September 1929	Scrapped 1955

When *Canberra* was sunk at the battle of Savo Island in August 1942, the British Admiralty decided to replace her with another County class vessel, HMS *Shropshire*. She was one of the London class sub-group of cruisers, which were essentially improved versions of the Kent class. These ships were slightly longer and narrower than their predecessors, and lacked their torpedo bulge. However, the bridge superstructure and funnels were placed further aft than in the Kent class, to improve their seakeeping qualities. *Shropshire* never underwent a major refit during the 1930s, although she was given four extra single 4in anti-aircraft guns, directed by HACS. She was also fitted with a catapult capable of operating one aircraft. Two quadruple 0.5in machine gun mountings were also fitted on either side of her foremast.

Perth class

In 1929, the Admiralty began drawing up plans for 6in cruisers, to conform to the requirements of a new treaty limit. The brief was for a cruiser of around 7,000 tons, armed with eight 6in guns in four twin turrets, and capable of achieving a speed in excess of 32 knots. Armour would be sufficient to protect these cruisers from 6in shell hits out to a range of 10,000 yards, while additional horizontal armour over the magazines would offer some defence against longer range plunging fire. The result was the Leander class of four light cruisers, which were laid down during 1930–31, and completed in 1933–34. A fifth vessel, *Ajax*, was laid down in 1933 and

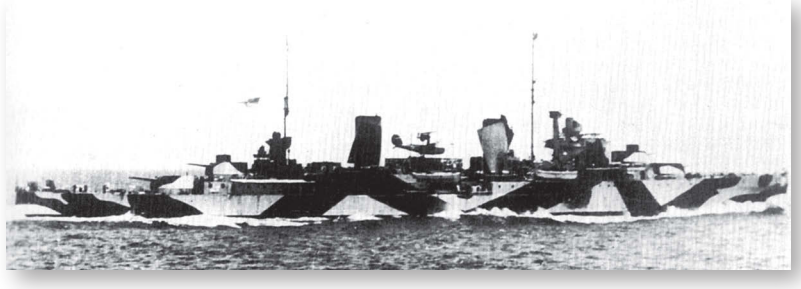
The light cruiser HMAS *Sydney*, shown here shortly after her completion in September 1935. The most notable difference between the Perth class and other Leanders was that they had two rather than one funnel, which permitted the installation of an aircraft catapult between the funnels.

entered service in early 1935. These light cruisers – a term that was just coming into vogue – were followed by a group of three more, which were described as modified Leander class vessels. Although originally earmarked for service with the Royal Navy as the Amphion class, this sub-class was then transferred to the RAN, and duly became the Perth class.

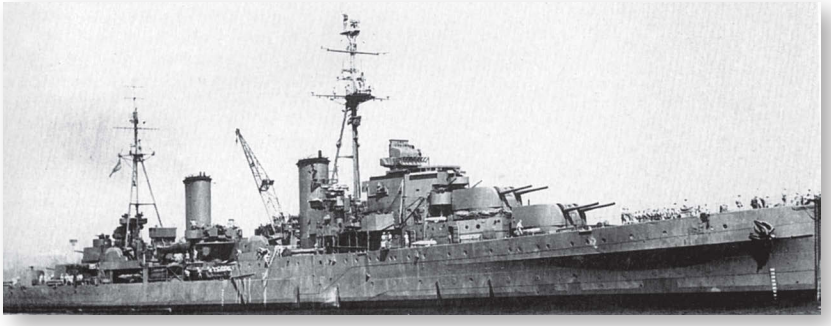
Name	Built	Laid Down	Launched	Completed	Fate
Sydney	Swan Hunter, Tyneside	8 July 1933	22 September 1934	24 September 1935	Sunk in action, 19 November 1941
Perth	HM Dockyard, Portsmouth	26 June 1933	27 July 1934	6 July 1936	Sunk in action, 1 March 1942
Hobart	HM Dockyard, Devonport	15 August 1933	9 October 1934	13 January 1936	Scrapped 1962

This group of ships – *Sydney*, *Perth* and *Hobart* – differed most noticeably from their predecessors by having two funnels, rather than just one. This modification was made to permit the division of the machinery spaces into two 'units', the idea being that if one were damaged, the other unit could still function. Each unit consisted of a boiler room and an engine room, one driving the outer shafts, the other the inner ones. These spaces were also more commodious than those in Leander class cruisers. This configuration involved the loss of two boilers, so the Perths carried four Admiralty boilers, rather than the six carried in the Leander class vessels. Surprisingly, the reduction in the number of boilers did not reduce the power generated – like the Leanders, each of these ships generated 72,000shp, which gave them a top speed of more than 32 knots.

To protect this larger and more elongated machinery space, the armoured belt also had to be lengthened slightly. This meant that any weight saved by employing fewer boilers was lost again owing to the additional weight of armour. This belt was 4in thick around these areas, which tapered to 1in fore and aft of the ship's vitals. A further protective armoured box built around the magazines was between 1 and 3½in thick. One advantage of the new funnel arrangement was that it permitted the fitting of an aircraft catapult between them – a feature considered important to the Australian government, which planned to use the vessels for trade route protection. Before transferring to the RAN, this catapult was replaced by



The Perth class light cruiser HMAS *Perth*, pictured here in 1942, in the unofficial camouflage scheme she carried from November 1941 until her loss in the Sunda Strait in February 1942. Her port side bore a different experimental colour scheme, and was painted in overall blue-grey (probably Admiralty B5). Note the baffles fitted around her funnels, to confuse enemy rangefinders.



As HMAS *Hobart* was the only Perth class light cruiser still afloat by the summer of 1942, she was therefore the most heavily modified. Her catapult was removed, a suite of radars fitted, and her anti-aircraft armament improved. She was also the only ship of her class to be fitted with tripod masts, visible here in this photograph taken in December 1944.

one which permitted the use of the Supermarine Walrus seaplane.

Before the outbreak of war in September 1939, all three ships received a varying number of 2-pounder 'pom-poms' and 20mm light anti-aircraft guns. Further modifications were made as the war progressed, although only *Hobart* survived long enough to undergo significant improvements, including the fitting of a full suite of radars and sensors. Despite the loss of two of them in action, these Perth class light cruisers proved themselves to be excellent and versatile warships, with the firepower, speed and protection to make a real difference in the naval war.

ROYAL NEW ZEALAND NAVY CRUISERS

Leander class

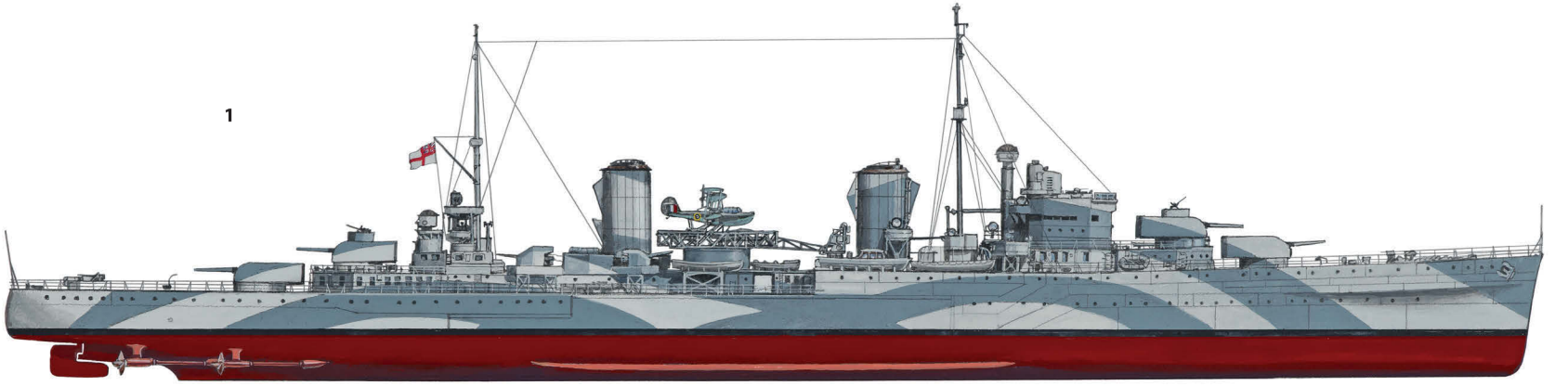
In the London Naval Treaty, which was signed in April 1930, cruisers were divided into two types, heavy cruisers and light cruisers. Heavy cruisers – those that carried guns larger than 6.1in (15.5cm) – had their numbers limited. According to the treaty, the Royal Navy could maintain 15 of these vessels. However, there was no cap on the number of lighter cruisers, other than a total tonnage. It therefore benefited the navy to build light cruisers armed with 6in guns, with a relatively small displacement. In fact, the Admiralty had already considered this problem, and had approved the design of a suitable cruiser. In 1928, the Admiralty asked naval designers to produce plans for a warship which could combine the two cruiser roles of supporting

C

THE ROYAL AUSTRALIAN NAVY: LIGHT CRUISERS

1:HMAS *Perth*. The size of the Royal Australian Navy had been reduced during the inter-war years due to financial constraints and a lack of any clear threat. However, the escalation of international tensions during the 1930s led to the expansion and modernization of the service, and the commissioning of a new class of three light cruisers. HMAS *Perth* was the first of these to be launched, and so became the namesake of the group of modified Leander class vessels. During World War II *Perth* saw extensive service in the Mediterranean, but in late 1941 she returned to home waters in response to Japan's entry into the war. *Perth* was subsequently sunk on 1 March 1942, during the battle of the Sunda Strait. This view of the cruiser shows her as she appeared during her final campaign in the Dutch East Indies.

2: HMAS *Hobart*. A sister ship of the *Perth*, *Hobart* entered service with the RAN in October 1938, and spent the early war years in home waters, the Indian Ocean and the Red Sea. She returned to home waters after the Japanese declaration of war, and saw action during the fighting in the Dutch East Indies. From mid-1942 onwards she fought alongside the US Navy, taking part in the battle of the Coral Sea, and in the fighting around Guadalcanal and the Solomon Islands. In July 1943 she was badly damaged by a torpedo, and it was early 1945 before she resumed active service. *Hobart* was the only ship of her class to survive the war. This plate shows *Hobart* as she appeared during the summer of 1945, during the naval campaign fought in the waters around Borneo. Like the light cruisers of the Leander class, the Perth class carried a main battery of eight 6in Mark XXIII guns, in four twin turrets, a secondary battery of four single 4in Mark V guns, and a close-range anti-aircraft battery of two quadruple 0.5in machine guns. Shortly before being transferred to the RAN, *Hobart* and *Perth* had their secondary 4in battery replaced by eight 4in Mark XVI guns in four twin mountings. *Sydney* retained her single 4in guns until her loss in late 1941.



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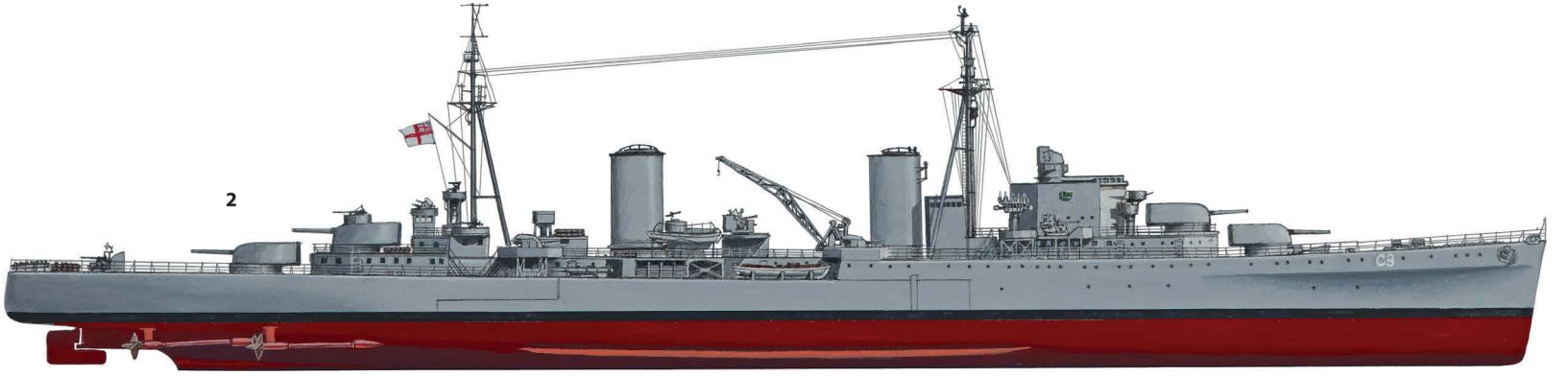

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HMNZS *Leander*, as she appeared in June 1944. This colour scheme of overall mid-grey, with a dark grey panel in her hull, was favoured in the British Pacific Fleet. By this time 'X' turret had been removed, and her anti-aircraft armament had been strengthened.

the battle fleet and trade protection. By then, this fleet support role involved countering attacks by enemy destroyers, conducting night attacks and shadowing the enemy.

Several designs were considered, but in late 1929 an eight-gun configuration using four twin turrets was selected, guided by a modern fire control system. These ships had to be immune to the fire of enemy destroyers, and offered adequate protection from enemy 6in cruisers. The result was a similar protective system to the older heavy cruisers: the thickest part of the belt or deck armour was concentrated around the ships' vitals. However, in order to keep the displacement down to around 7,000 tons, a greater emphasis was placed on speed and firepower than on protection. Another compromise was in accommodation. In order to fit everything into a vessel of just 7,000 tons displacement, by necessity the internal layout of these ships was cramped, and so standards of accommodation were less than those in earlier cruisers.

The first of these new light cruisers, *Leander*, was laid down in September 1930, and was completed less than two years later, in March 1933. She therefore gave her name to the class that eventually comprised five light cruisers. Of these, two would serve in the Royal New Zealand Navy. These five ships became the first and only single-funnelled cruisers built for the Royal Navy since the late 19th century. The 6in Mark XXIII guns had a range of around 12 nautical miles, and proved extremely effective, particularly because they could be hand-loaded, which permitted a very fast rate of fire, at least until fatigue crept in.

Name	Built	Laid Down	Launched	Completed	Fate
Leander	HM Dockyard, Devonport	8 September 1930	24 September 1931	24 March 1933	Scrapped, 1949
Achilles	Cammell Laird, Birkenhead	11 June 1931	1 September 1932	6 October 1933	Transferred to Royal Indian Navy, 1948

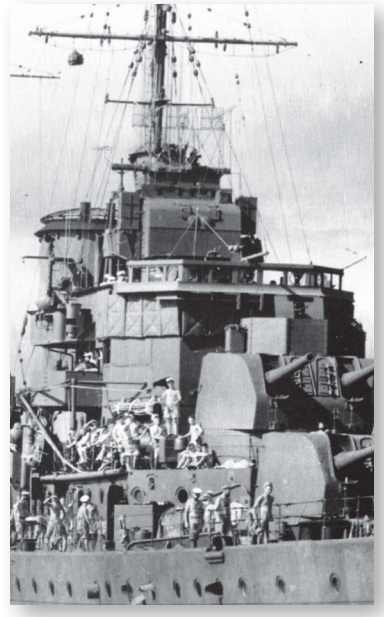
Like other British cruisers, the secondary armament of four single 4in Mark Vs gave the ship a reasonable level of anti-aircraft defence, augmented by quadruple-mounted 0.5in machine guns. A four-tube 21in torpedo launcher was also carried on each beam. Before the outbreak of war, the single 4in gun mountings were replaced by twin Mark XVI mounts. This modification though, only took place on *Achilles* in 1943–44. All of these cruisers were designed to carry a single seaplane, mounted on a single catapult. *Leander* and *Achilles* were both commissioned into the Royal Navy, but for the most part they were crewed by seamen from the Royal Navy's New Zealand Division.

Crown Colony class

While the British were designing 6in gun light cruisers armed with eight guns, the Japanese response to the London Naval Treaty was to build light cruisers of a similar displacement as their heavy cruisers, but armed with 15 6.1in

guns, mounted in five triple turrets. The first of these Mogami class cruisers were laid down in 1931, and entered service during the summer of 1935. American designers were also contemplating the use of ships with a similar configuration. British designers had also been experimenting with triple gun turrets, and so in 1933 the Admiralty commissioned the design of a new larger breed of light cruiser, vessels which were laid down between 1934 and 1936. These Southampton class (or new Town class) cruisers carried 12 6in guns apiece, in four triple turrets. These ships were much larger than those of the Leander class, and displaced over 9,000 tons each. They were the future of British cruiser design.

Armoured protection was also increased, with a belt of 3–4in, with a similarly improved level of protection afforded to the gun turrets. The first of these ships entered service in 1937 and proved to be extremely effective both in terms of performance and firepower. After all, they fired a salvo which was 50 per cent larger than that fired by the Leanders, and they were comparable in performance to the latest cruisers built by foreign navies. The last three cruisers of the class were modified slightly, by being provided with additional turret protection and thicker deck armour over their vitals. Technically, these three ships formed the Gloucester class sub-group of the Town class. In 1936 they were followed by two even larger Edinburgh class cruisers which followed the same basic design, but which were both more powerful and better protected. Two years later they were followed by the Crown Colony class.



The bridge superstructure of HMNZS *Leander*, photographed during the early summer of 1943, before the cruiser was torpedoed during the battle of Kolombangara. A single 20mm anti-aircraft gun is fitted on top of 'B' turret, one of four added during a refit performed in Auckland earlier that year.

Unlike the Southamptons, which were built according to the more liberal specifications of the London Naval Treaty of 1930, the cruisers of the Crown Colony (or Fiji) class were all planned and built according to the terms agreed in the Second London Naval Treaty, which was signed in 1936. The treaty limited the size of new cruisers to 8,000 tons, around 2,000 tons less than the ships of the Southampton class. However, the Admiralty liked the Southampton class design, and therefore decided to build a class of cruisers with a similar level of firepower. As a result, compromises were made in areas such as accommodation, protection and size, but not in weaponry or propulsion.

Name	Built	Laid Down	Launched	Completed	Transferred to RNZN	Fate
Gambia	Swan Hunter, Tyneside	24 July 1939	30 November 1940	21 February 1942	22 September 1943	Scrapped, 1968

This meant that the cruisers of the Crown Colony class were shorter and narrower than the Southamptons, and had a transom, or squared-off stern. For the most part, welding rather than riveting was used in the construction, which also saved weight, and the engine room configuration was made more compact to reduce the size of the thickest portion of the armoured belt. As a result, the belt on these cruisers varied from 1 to 3½in, and the armoured deck was concentrated over the machinery spaces. These ships still carried 12 6in Mark XXIII guns, in four triple turrets, but only one director tower was installed, rather than two, to control their fire. Like the Southamptons, they carried eight 4in Mark XVI guns in twin turrets, plus a small battery of lighter anti-aircraft guns, plus torpedoes. Space was even found for a catapult, and two or three aircraft.

ROYAL CANADIAN NAVY CRUISERS

Modified Crown Colony class

Five Crown Colony cruisers were ordered in 1937, laid down in 1938, and entered service during 1940–41. However, of the second batch of four cruisers ordered in 1938, two were laid down that year, while work on the others – *Uganda* and *Ceylon* – was delayed until 1939. Two more – *Bermuda* and *Newfoundland* – were ordered in 1939. However, production of all of these ships was overtaken by events. When the war began, the repair of damaged warships was given a higher priority than the construction of new vessels, and so production was slower than the Admiralty had planned. In 1940, although work had started on them, construction was temporarily suspended on three of these ships, *Uganda*, *Newfoundland* and *Ceylon*, as the resources needed to build them were simply not available.

Name	Built	Laid Down	Launched	Completed	Transferred to RCN	Fate
Uganda	Vickers Armstrong, Tyneside	20 July 1939	7 August 1941	3 January 1943	21 October 1944	Scrapped, 1961

The Admiralty used this temporary delay to redesign the cruisers slightly. The first ship of the class, *Fiji*, entered service in the summer of 1940, and so the designers were able to modify their plans for these last three ships in the light of actual performance. While together these three cruisers and the eight that preceded them are referred to as Cape Colony class vessels, the first batch of eight ships are often described as a sub-group known as the Fiji class. The final batch of three ships is described as Modified Fiji class, or Uganda class vessels. The biggest difference was the loss of a main gun turret. By the time *Uganda* and her two sister ships entered service in 1943 it was felt that in light of wartime cruiser losses from enemy air attacks, the anti-aircraft defences of these ships needed to be bolstered. The easiest way to make space for this was to remove a gun turret.

The original idea was for 'X' turret to be replaced by two twin 4in guns. However, after much deliberation only one was to be mounted in place of the 6in turret, and by the time the ships were completed even this scheme had been abandoned. Instead, *Uganda* and her sisters carried an extra quadruple

D

THE ROYAL NEW ZEALAND NAVY

1: HMNZS *Achilles*. Even before the foundation of the Royal New Zealand Navy (RNZN), two Leander class cruisers of the Royal Navy were crewed by men from the Royal Navy's New Zealand Division. Effectively *Leander* and her sister ship *Achilles* became New Zealand warships in all but name, with over three-fifths of their ship's companies being New Zealand personnel. In December 1939, *Achilles* took part in the battle of the River Plate, where three cruisers engaged the German pocket battleship *Graf Spee*. After the battle *Achilles* returned to New Zealand for a refit, and then spent the rest of the war serving in the Pacific. This plate shows *Achilles* as she appeared during the winter of 1941–42, after the creation of the RNZN. During this period the cruiser was operating in the South Pacific.

2: HMNZS *Gambia*. As the war progressed the RNZN grew in size, but her cruiser force remained static at two Leander class vessels. However, during the battle of Kolombangara (July 1943) *Leander* was so badly damaged that she remained out of action for the remainder of the war. So in September the Fiji class light cruiser *Gambia* was transferred to the RNZN, to bring the New Zealanders' cruiser force back up to strength. HMNZS *Gambia* spent the rest of the war in the Pacific. Her powerful armament made her a useful addition to the British Pacific Fleet, and she saw action off Okinawa, Formosa and the mainland of Japan before the end of hostilities. This shows her as she looked in the summer of 1944, while she was supporting amphibious operations in the East Indies.

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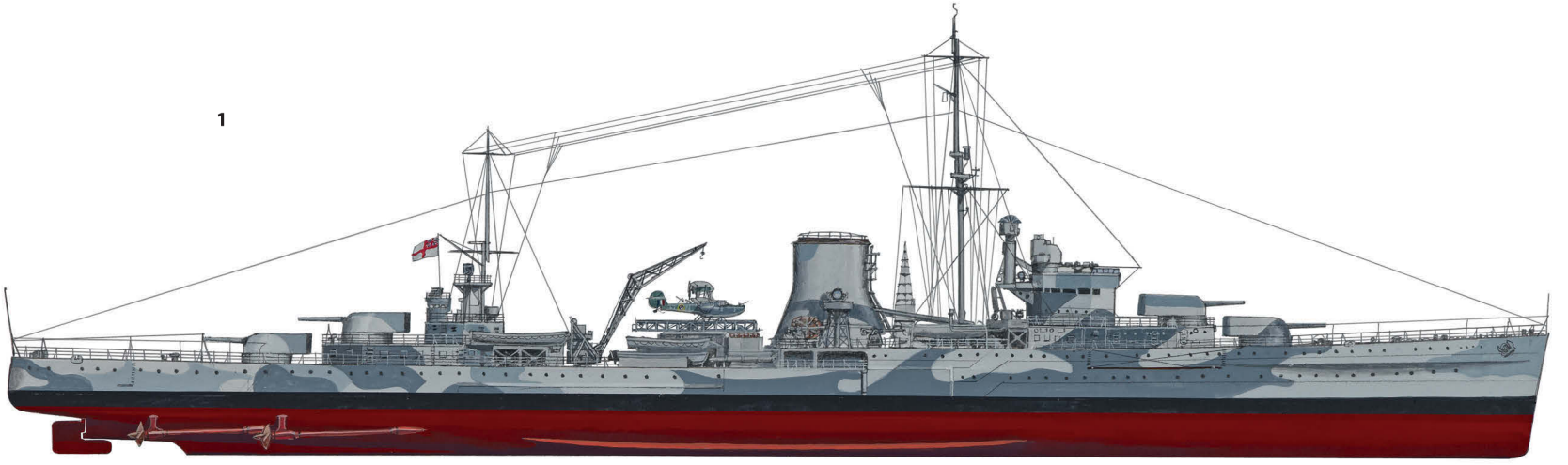

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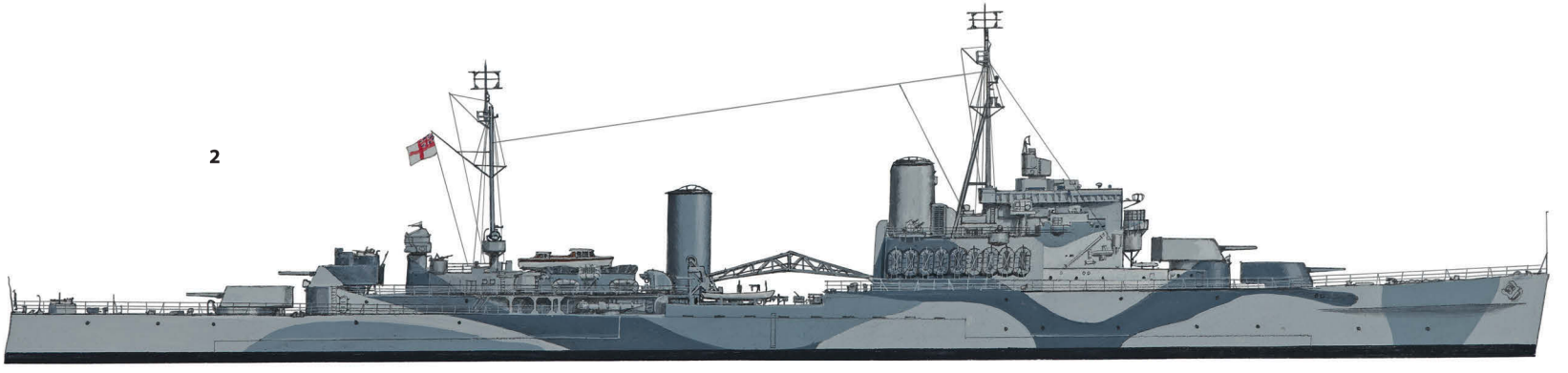


HMS *Uganda* was transferred to the Royal Canadian Navy in October 1944, and the following year as HMCS *Uganda* she saw service with the British Pacific Fleet, taking part in the fighting off Okinawa, Formosa and Truk. It was there that her suite of anti-aircraft defences, fire control systems and air warning radars were truly tested.

2-pdr 'pom-pom' in lieu of 'X' turret, while the other two multiple 'pom-poms' carried on the Fijis were sited further aft on the Ugandas, to improve their field of fire. The ships were also given an Air Defence Room, to coordinate task force air cover and anti-aircraft defence, and an impressive suite of air search and surface search radars. Additional light anti-aircraft guns were fitted to *Uganda* while she was in Royal Naval service, and during her emergency refit in the United States. So by the time she entered service with the RCN, she was well prepared for the threat posed by Japanese kamikaze planes in the Pacific.

Swiftsure class

In 1941 the Admiralty decided to order three more Cape Colony class light cruisers. Later that year, three more were ordered, followed by two more in 1942. However, these ships underwent considerable change on the design board. First, it was decided to build these as Uganda class cruisers, with only nine 6in guns apiece. Extra anti-aircraft batteries were built into the design, which increased the top weight of the ships. This in turn led to a slight increase of their beam. Unlike the Ugandas, they received an additional twin 4in gun turret in the 'X' turret position, but they were never fitted with an aircraft catapult. Otherwise they resembled their Cape Colony class predecessors. The first of these ships, *Tiger*, was laid down in October 1941, and work began on two more, *Minotaur* and *Swiftsure*, a month later.

Construction, however, was given a low priority. The Battle of the Atlantic was reaching its climax, and Britain's over-stretched resources were needed elsewhere. So, of this group of eight cruisers, one was cancelled before she was even laid down, and the laying down of another was postponed for more than two years. The remaining three ships were laid down during the summer of 1942. All of these ships underwent considerable changes during their construction, so eventually only two, *Swiftsure* and *Minotaur,* were built according to the original design as modified Cape Colony class cruisers. During construction, *Minotaur* was earmarked for the Royal Canadian Navy, and was renamed *Ontario*. However, she and her sister were variously described as Minotaur class or Swiftsure class cruisers.

Name	Built	Laid Down	Launched	Completed	Fate
Ontario (formerly *Minotaur*)	Harland and Wolff, Belfast	20 November 1941	29 July 1943	25 May 1945	Scrapped, 1960

Incidentally, of the remaining ships in this group, one was scrapped before she was launched, and work on three more was postponed until the mid-1950s. They eventually became *Tiger*, *Blake* and *Lion*, the last cruisers to enter service with the *Royal* Navy, by which time their original design had been altered beyond recognition. That left *Superb*, which resembled the two cruisers of the Swiftsure class, but had a wider beam, and a modified armament. Effectively, she remained one of a kind. Although *Ontario* entered service too late to see action, she and *Uganda* formed the core of the post-war

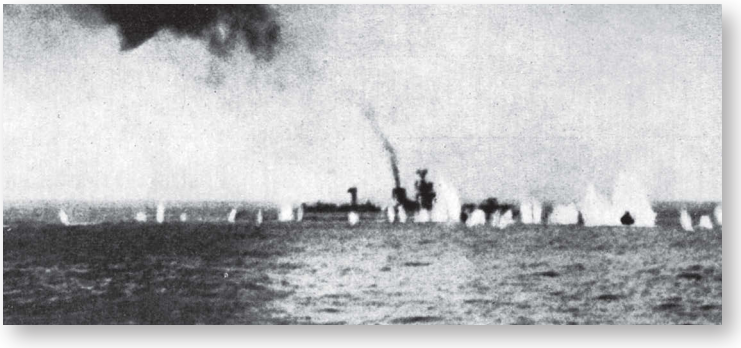
RCN, and the two cruisers would receive several modifications during their long careers in Canadian service.

THE DOMINION FLEETS AT WAR

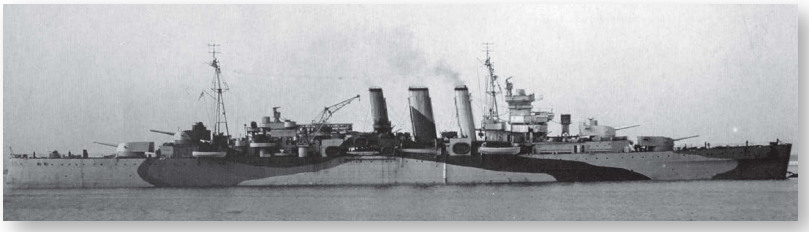
On 3 September 1939, Britain found itself at war with Nazi Germany. India and the smaller Crown colonies and protectorates of the British Empire were automatically involved in the conflict alongside Britain; the dominions were free to do as they wished. With the exception of Ireland which remained neutral, all of them elected to support Britain by declaring war on Germany. When the war spread to involve Italy (June 1940), Imperial Japan (December 1941) and other smaller Axis allies, the dominions declared war on these countries too.The contribution of the dominions in military resources was crucial to the Commonwealth war effort. Without them the Royal Navy would have been hard-pressed to protect its global trade routes against enemy surface raiders and U-boats, or to maintain sufficient forces to withstand attack by new foes – most notably Italy and Japan. Obviously, the entry of Japan into the war meant that for Australia and New Zealand the war in the Pacific became the key theatre, as the Japanese posed a direct military threat to both dominions. Until then, both the RAN and the New Zealand Division of the RN had been busy supporting the Royal Navy in other theatres – most notably the Mediterranean. After December 1941, these dominion warships were sent home to play their part in stemming the Japanese tide.

The humiliating fall of Singapore in February 1942 demonstrated that Britain was unable to protect its empire fully. Allied naval defeats in the East Indies and the Indian Ocean meant that Britain's Eastern Fleet no longer had the ability to operate far from its bases in Ceylon and India. Australia and New Zealand were effectively left to their own devices. This encouraged the two dominions to forge stronger military ties with the United States, in order to bolster their own defences. From the spring of 1942 on, both the RAN and the RNZN would become naval partners of the US Navy, fighting alongside them in the South West Pacific. It was not until May 1944 that the newly formed British Pacific Fleet would return to the theatre, and begin repairing some of the political and diplomatic damage Britain's strategic absence had caused.

In Canada, the priority was the safe passage of ships across the Atlantic Ocean, or the eastern seaboard of North America. This meant that while the RCN was keen to counter the threat posed by the Japanese in the Pacific, the real threat came from German U-boats operating in the North Atlantic. Not only did this mean larger naval warships such as cruisers were less important to the fleet than destroyers and escort vessels, but Canada's limited naval resources were also concentrated on the east coast rather than the west. It was only when the crisis of the Battle of the Atlantic had passed



During the battle of Cape Spada (19 July 1940), fought off the north-west corner of Crete, HMAS *Sydney* engaged two Italian light cruisers. One was sunk, the other badly damaged. In this photograph taken from *Sydney*, the *Bartolomeo Colleoni* is bracketed by fire from the Australian cruiser and her attendant destroyers.



HMAS *Canberra* underwent a refit during 1941–42, and when she rejoined the fleet in June 1942 she bore this camouflage scheme, of light, mid- and dark grey – a scheme she still carried when she was sunk in action during the battle of Savo Island.

that the RCN was willing to play its part in the Pacific War. While the addition of two Canadian cruisers to the Allied fleets would make little difference in terms of naval power, the Canadian government saw this commitment as a useful diplomatic tool.

The Canadian sailors viewed things differently. In Canada, shortly before the defeat of Nazi Germany, it was decided that only volunteers would be used to fight the Japanese. Consequently, the crew of the *Uganda* – then serving in the Pacific – were given the chance to vote on whether or not they would continue the war against Japan to its conclusion. On 7 May 1945 two-thirds of *Uganda*'s crew decided not to volunteer to fight the Japanese. Effectively they considered that their 'hostilities only' commitment had ceased following the German surrender, which had been signed earlier that day. The result was a huge embarrassment for the RCN, which had no option but to send the cruiser home, to be re-crewed by volunteers. This, though, offered a clear demonstration that Canadian sailors – like their dominion counterparts from Australia and New Zealand – had their own way of doing things, and their own set of values. This is what set the men of these Dominion navies apart.

Much has been said about the cheerfulness and 'can-do' attitude of servicemen from these three dominions. Historians have also commented on what was sometimes perceived as a less rigid attitude towards discipline than in either the Royal Navy or the US Navy. This was not necessarily the case – the Dominion navies simply tended to have a more pragmatic approach to service life, and to naval rules and regulations. Much of this stemmed from a less rigid social hierarchy in civilian life, and a more tolerant naval one in the fleet. Another factor was the fact that as well as being a mixture of pre-war sailors and 'hostilities only' ratings, many were unused to life in large ships. After all, these cruisers were among the largest ships in these dominion fleets, and so most sailors were more used to life on board smaller warships such as destroyers or escort vessels.

This was particularly true in the RCN, as its two wartime cruisers only entered service towards the end of the war. During this time Canadian sailors

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THE ROYAL CANADIAN NAVY

1: HMCS *Uganda*. *Uganda* was a Cape Colony class light cruiser which began her career as HMS *Uganda*. She first entered service in January 1943, and served with the Royal Navy in the Atlantic and the Mediterranean, where she was badly damaged off Salerno. Her repairs lasted until early 1944, and in October she was transferred to the Royal Canadian Navy (RCN) becoming HMCS *Uganda*. In March 1945 she joined the British Pacific Fleet, and took part in attacks on Formosa, and then the Okinawa campaign. She went on to bombard the Japanese mainland before the Japanese surrender. In 1952 the *Uganda* was renamed *Quebec*, and saw action again off Korea. This view of her shows her as she appeared during the fighting off Okinawa, in April 1945.

2: HMCS *Ontario*. The *Ontario* was a Swiftsure class light cruiser, which in turn was a modified version of the Colony (or Fiji) class. The main difference was that the two vessels of the Swiftsure class only had three main turrets, rather than four. *Ontario* was originally called *Minotaur*, but her name was changed on her transfer to the RCN while the cruiser was still being built. She entered service with the RCN in April 1945, and was sent east to join the British Pacific Fleet. However, the war ended before she could see active service. This plate shows how *Ontario* looked when she first entered Canadian service in the spring of 1945.

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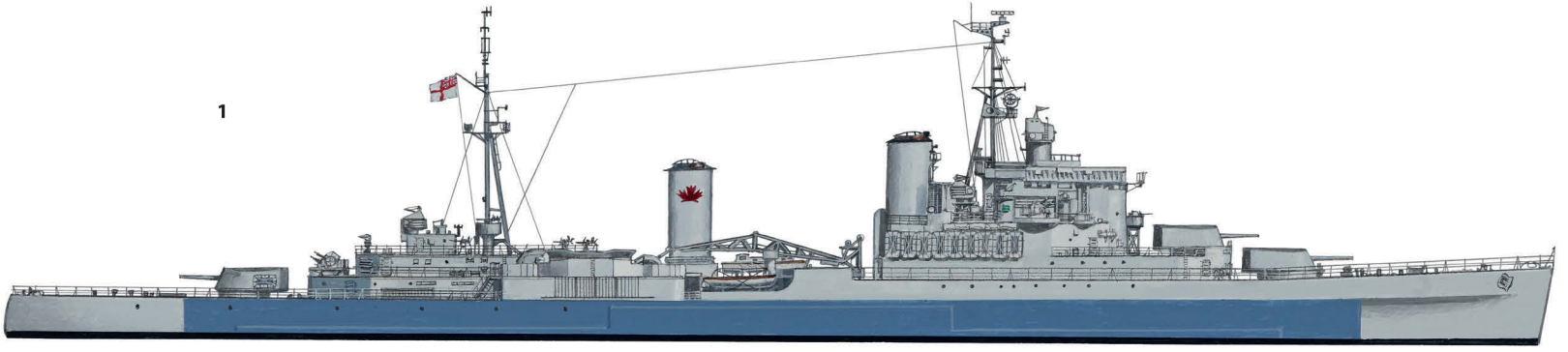

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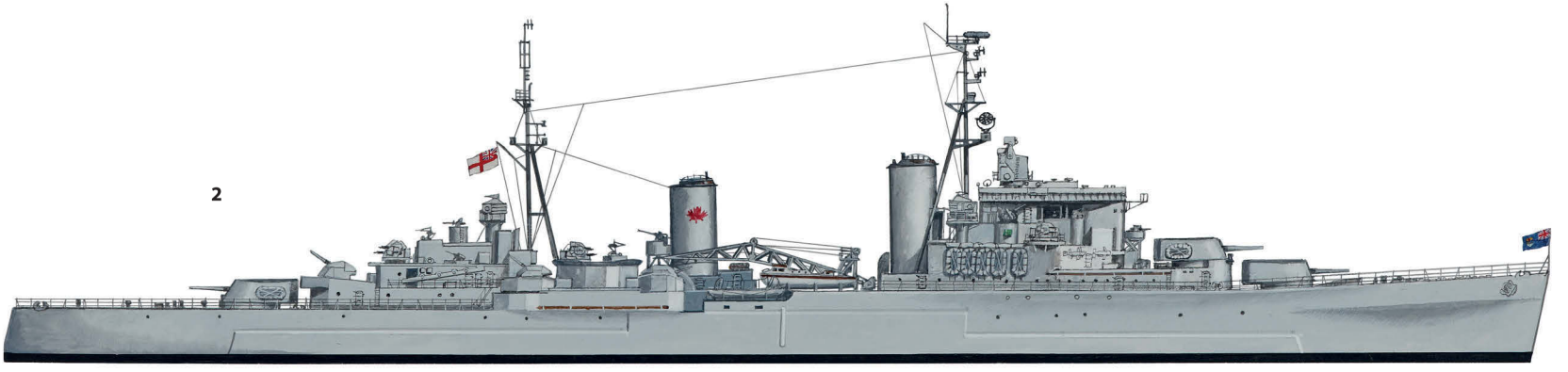
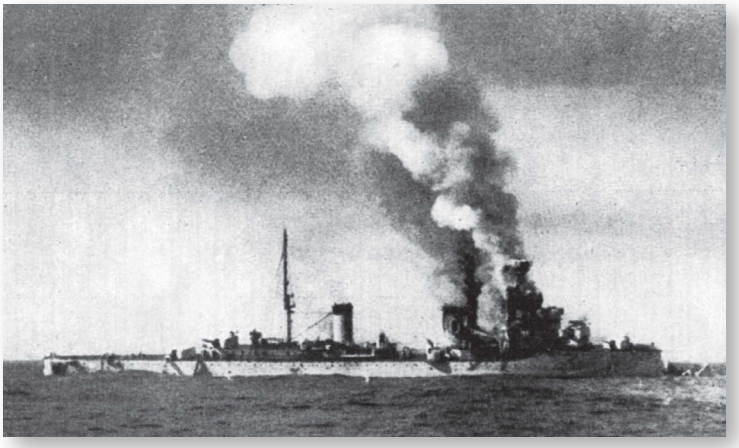




The Italian light cruiser *Bartolomeo Colleoni* was immobilized by the guns of HMAS *Sydney*, then finished off by torpedoes fired by British destroyers. This photograph shows her in her final moments, after a torpedo has shorn off her bow.

had learned their trade on board the small warships which were engaged in the Battle of the Atlantic. Many resented being drafted to the *Uganda*. As one young Canadian officer recalled:

> They [the crew] were all corvette men, and if they were half a mind whether they wanted to [join the ship], as soon as they got there they wished they hadn't. For one thing it was bloody hot. The other thing was they never arrived with the proper kit. Most of them had never even worn a proper uniform in their whole naval career.

In fact two-thirds of the cruiser's crew had been drafted to her directly from smaller vessels, so were completely unused to 'big ship routines'.

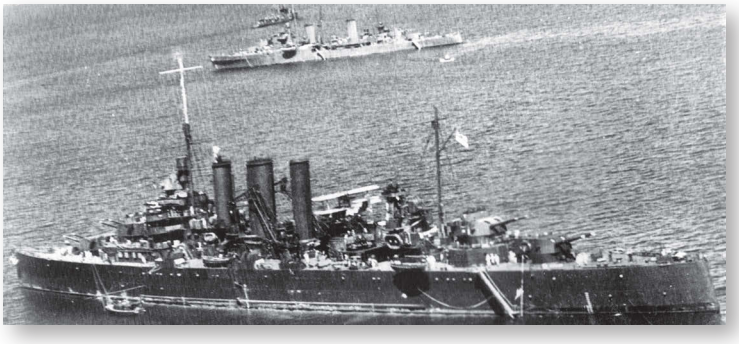
A medical officer on board was even more frank, having witnessed the effect a prolonged period in Charleston, South Carolina was having on the young Canadian sailors. He said:

> It was noticeable that the attitude of the ship's company improved as soon as the ship left the refit yard, where the presence of dockyard mateys and the constant turmoil and dirt offered no incentive to cleanliness of ship or person, or to orderliness of mind ... This, plus the lack of healthy and varied recreation was to a large degree responsible for the high incidence of exposure to, and development of, venereal disease.

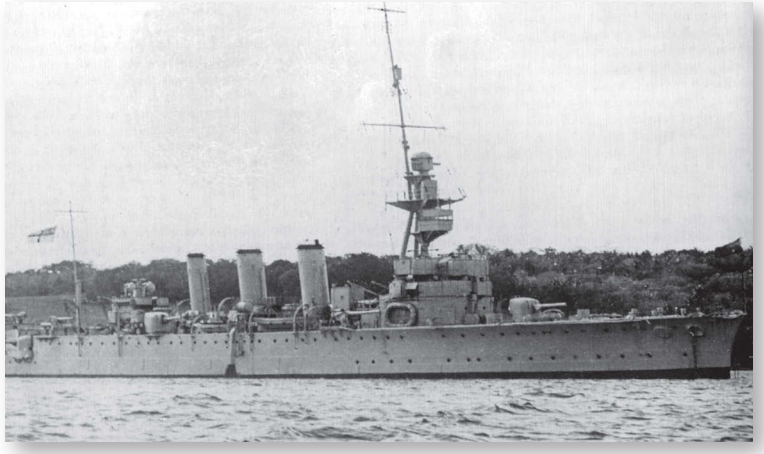
After setting sail, he noted that 'the morale of the ship is good and is improving'.

In fact, this does a disservice to the crew of *Uganda*, and to those of other dominion cruisers. Their crews were a mixture of experienced and new hands, and it took time for them to settle down as a ship's company. However, training standards were high, and British and American senior officers consistently praised both the enthusiasm and the skill of the Commonwealth crews under their command. In Britain, the exploits of the *Achilles* at the battle of the River Plate (November 1939) raised the profile of the New Zealand Naval Division, and arguably helped secure the creation of the Royal New Zealand Navy. Similarly, the exemplary performance of Australian and New Zealand cruisers in both the Mediterranean and the South West Pacific resulted in official commendations and battle honours for the ships involved.

HMAS *Australia* in the foreground, bearing an overall dark grey colour scheme (using Admiralty paint colour 507a). In the background HMAS *Hobart* can be seen, painted in a lighter overall scheme of mid-grey (507b). This photograph was probably taken off Noumea in the summer of 1943.



The Canadian cruisers also earned commendations – the *Uganda* in particular performed well in the face of Japanese kamikaze attacks and in the performance of critical fire support missions. Above all these ships acted as floating ambassadors for the dominion countries, demonstrating the commitment of Australia, New Zealand and Canada to the Allied war effort, and to the cause of upholding the values of civilization and democracy. They supported Great Britain when her very survival was at stake, and played no small part in turning the tide in the hard-fought naval campaigns in the Mediterranean and the Pacific. Without these ships and men the course of the war might have been very different. Three of these cruisers were lost during the conflict – *Sydney*, *Perth* and *Canberra*. In each case the human cost of the loss was high – almost 1,200 Australian sailors lost their lives on board these ships, or in captivity afterwards, including the entire 645-man crew of the *Sydney*. Their sacrifice should not be forgotten.



Before the war began, HMAS *Adelaide* had her coal-fired boilers replaced by a more modern oil-fired system, and her main armament altered so that all her 6in guns were mounted on her centreline. Between 1942 and 1943 radar was added, her anti-aircraft armament was improved, and two of her 6in guns were removed, to make way for depth charge racks.

SHIP DETAILS

HMAS Adelaide (1939): Birmingham class light cruiser

Displacement:	5,639 tons (standard), 6,160 tons (fully laden)
Dimensions:	Length: 462ft 9in (141.1m) overall Beam: 50ft (15.2m) Draught: 16ft (4.9m) mean
Propulsion:	Two Parsons turbines, ten Yarrow boilers, two propeller shafts, generating 23,500shp
Maximum speed:	24 knots
Range:	4,140 nautical miles at 16 knots
Armament:	Seven 6in Mark XII guns in single mounts Two 4in guns in single mounts
Armour:	Belt: 3in Deck: 1.5in Conning Tower: 4in
Complement:	470 men
Wartime Modifications:	Summer 1942: Six 20mm AA guns in single mounts added, as well as a Type 271 surface search radar. Summer 1943: One 6in and one 4in gun removed, four Mark II depth charge throwers added, along with Type 285 fire control (4in battery).
Wartime Service:	*Adelaide* conducted patrols and escort duties in home waters until September 1940, when she was sent to Noumea, to counter Vichy French activity in New Caledonia. From October 1940 until May 1942 *Adelaide* remained in home waters, before undergoing a three-month refit. On completion she operated as a convoy escort in the Indian Ocean, and in November she intercepted and sank a German blockade runner. She underwent another refit from June to September 1943, then remained in home waters until the end of the war.

HMAS *Australia* and *Canberra*: Kent class heavy cruisers

Displacement:	10,007 tons (standard), 13,500 tons (fully laden)
Dimensions:	Length: 630ft (192.1m) overall Beam: 68ft 3in (20.8 metres) Draught: 16ft 3in (5.0m) mean
Propulsion:	Four Brown-Curtis turbines, eight Admiralty boilers, four propeller shafts, generating 80,000shp
Maximum speed:	31.5 knots
Range:	9,500 nautical miles at 12 knots
Armament:	Eight 8in Mark VIII guns in twin mounts, Eight 4in Mark V guns in twin mounts (*Australia*) Four 4in Mark V guns in single mounts (*Canberra*) Four 2-pdrs in single mounts Two four-barrelled 0.5in machine gun mounts Eight 21in torpedoes in two quadruple launchers Aircraft: One aircraft, with catapult (*Australia* only until 1941)
Armour:	Belt: 1–4.5in Deck: 1.4in Turrets and Conning Tower: 1in
Complement:	848 men
Wartime modifications (*Australia*)	Summer 1942: Torpedo tubes and machine guns removed, seven single 20mm guns added, together with full radar suite (fire control, surface search and air warning). March 1944: Aircraft and catapult removed, new tripod masts fitted, single 20mm guns replaced by twin mountings. August 1944: Starboard crane removed, Derricks and Samson Posts fitted instead, radar suite upgraded. February 1945: 'X' turret removed, two 8-barrelled 2-pdr pom-poms' added, plus two quadruple, one twin and two single 40mm Bofors guns.
Wartime Modifications (*Canberra*):	May 1942: Four additional 4in guns on single mountings added, together with two 8-barrelled 2-pdr 'pom-poms' and four 20mm AA guns on single mountings. Radar suite added (Type 241 surface search, Type 290 air warning).
Wartime Service (*Australia*):	*Australia* was employed on convoy duties between Australia and Africa until July 1940, when she briefly saw service off Norway. She participated in the attack on Dakar in September, then returned to Australia in March 1941. After more convoy work in the Indian Ocean she became the flagship of the ANZAC Squadron, based in Noumea. She participated in the battle of the Coral Sea, and the fighting off Guadalcanal, and remained in the South West Pacific until 1944. In October she was damaged in a kamikaze attack, and remained out of action until January 1945, when she was damaged again, this time off Luzon in the Philippines. She remained out of service for the remainder of the war.
Wartime Service (*Canberra*):	*Canberra* spent the first months of the war patrolling home waters. In July 1940 she ventured into the Indian Ocean to hunt for German vessels, but her first encounter there was in March 1941, when she intercepted and sank two merchant vessels. After that she was used as a convoy escort, before moving to the East Indies in December. She underwent a refit in early 1942, and from June onwards she operated with the US Navy in the South Pacific. In August she was sunk during the battle of Savo Island, a night action fought off Guadalcanal.

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HMAS *SYDNEY* IN ACTION OFF CAPE SPADA, 1941

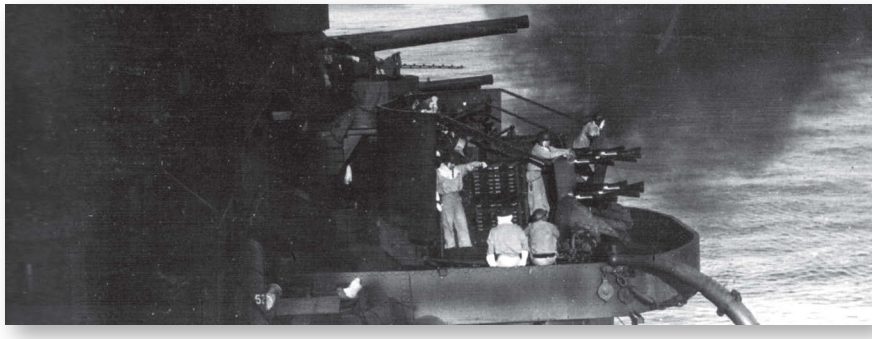
When Italy declared war on Britain and its Commonwealth in June 1940, HMAS *Sydney* was serving with the British Mediterranean Fleet. On 19 July, when patrolling to the north of Crete in company with five destroyers she encountered two Italian light cruisers – the *Bartolomeo Colleoni* and the *Bande Nere*. They were trying to enter the Aegean, but on seeing the destroyers they gave chase. *Sydney* and one destroyer were some way to the north, but they altered course to intercept the Italians. *Sydney* opened fire at 8.29am, and the Italians turned away. A chase ensued, with both sides exchanging fire. Eventually a shell from *Sydney* stopped the *Bartolomeo Colleoni* dead in the water, and after being silenced by *Sydney* she was finished off with torpedoes. The *Bande Nere* was hit twice, but managed to evade her pursuers. *Sydney* was hit once, but the damage was minor, and one Australian crewman was wounded. The plate shows *Sydney* and some of the British destroyers chasing the *Bande Nere*, leaving the stricken *Bartolomeo Colleoni* to the other destroyers. The small island of Agria Gramvousa can be seen behind the fleeing Italian cruiser, while beyond it lie the headlands of Cape Spada and Cape Busa, the latter being the north-west corner of Crete. Behind the *Sydney* is the destroyer HMS *Ilex*.

HMAS *Australia* as she appeared in the summer of 1943. By this stage her fighting capability had been augmented by the addition of fire control, air search and surface search radars. At the time she was serving as flagship of the ANZAC Squadron, based in the South Pacific.

HMAS *Shropshire*: London class heavy cruiser

Displacement:	10,007 tons (standard), 13,315 tons (fully laden)
Dimensions:	Length: 632ft 8in (192.8m) overall
	Beam: 66ft (20.1m)
	Draught: 20ft 9in (6.3m) mean
Propulsion:	Four Parsons turbines, eight Admiralty boilers, four propeller shafts, generating 80,000shp
Maximum speed:	32.5 knots
Range:	9,120 nautical miles at 12 knots
Armament (1943):	Eight 8in Mark VIII guns in twin mounts
	Eight 4in Mark V guns in four twin mounts
	Two eight-barrelled 2-pdr 'pom-poms'
	Seven twin 20mm guns
	Four single 20mm guns
	Eight 21in torpedoes in two quadruple launchers
Armour:	Belt: 1–4.5in
	Deck: 1.4in
	Turrets and Conning Tower: 1in
Sensors (1943):	Type 273 (surface search), Type 281 (air warning), Type 282 (light AA fire control), Type 285 (heavy AA fire control)
Complement:	820 men
Wartime Modifications:	Spring 1944: Two single 20mm guns added.
	Spring 1945: Five twin and seven single 20mm removed, along with the torpedo tubes. Eleven single 40mm Bofors guns added.
	Early Summer 1945: Four single 40mm Bofors guns added.
Wartime Service:	*Shropshire* served with the Royal Navy until December 1942, when she was transferred to the RAN. She was undergoing a refit at the time, and was commissioned on its completion, in April 1943. A further refit delayed her official transfer until June. In August 1943 she sailed for Australia, escorting a convoy to Cape Town en route. On arrival in August she joined Task Force 74, and served in the South West Pacific, seeing action off New Britain and the Admiralty Islands. In September 1944 she participated in the recapture of the Philippines, remaining there until June 1945, when she supported amphibious operations at Balikpapan in Borneo. She was off the Japanese home islands when Japan surrendered in August 1945.

Like many Commonwealth cruisers, HMAS *Shropshire* had a mixed array of anti-aircraft weapons, one of which was this – the eight-barrelled 2-pdr Mark VIII 'pom-pom'. The weapon was an old-fashioned but reasonably effective weapon, despite lacking the muzzle velocity and hitting power of more modern weapons systems.



HMAS *Sydney*, *Perth* and *Hobart*: Perth class light cruisers

Displacement:	6,939 tons (standard), 8,850 tons (fully laden) (*Sydney*) 6,980 tons (standard), 8,882 tons (fully laden) (*Perth*) 7,105 tons (standard), 9420 tons (fully laden) (*Hobart*)
Dimensions:	Length: 562ft 3in (171.4m) overall Beam: 56ft 8in (17.3m) Draught: 18ft 6in (5.6m) mean
Propulsion:	Four Parsons turbines, four Admiralty boilers, four propeller shafts, generating 72,000shp
Maximum speed:	32.5 knots
Range:	7,180 nautical miles at 12 knots
Armament:	Eight 6in Mark XXIII guns in four twin turrets Eight 4in Mark V guns in four twin turrets Three 4-barrelled 0.5in machine gun mountings Eight 21in torpedoes in two quadruple launchers Aircraft: One aircraft (Supermarine Walrus), with catapult
Armour:	Belt: 1–3.5in Deck: 1.4in Turrets and Conning Tower: 1in
Complement:	570 men
Wartime Modifications (*Sydney*):	Spring 1941: Four single 20mm guns added.

The Australian light cruisers of the Perth class carried a main armament of eight 6in Mark XXIII guns, mounted in four twin turrets. These guns were manually loaded, which meant they could attain a higher than usual rate of fire for short periods. This photograph was taken on board HMAS *Perth*.

Wartime Modifications (*Perth*):	Spring 1941: Four single 20mm guns added, replacing two quadruple machine gun mountings. May 1941: Four-barrelled 2-pdr 'pom-pom' added (removed in July). July 1941: Type 271 surface search (target indication) radar added.
Wartime Modifications (*Hobart*):	Spring 1941: Four single 20mm guns added. July 1941: Catapult and aircraft removed. October 1942: Tripod masts fitted, and 4in guns repositioned; Type 281 (air warning), SG (American surface search), Type 276 and 277 (target indication), Type 282, 283 and 285 (fire control) radars added. December 1944: Four-barrelled machine gun mount and all but one single 20mm guns removed, and replaced with three twin and five single 40mm Bofors guns, and two four-barrelled 2-pdr 'pom-poms'.
Wartime Service (*Sydney*):	*Sydney* remained in Australian waters until April 1940, then escorted a convoy to Ceylon before continuing on to the Mediterranean, arriving in early May. She was involved in the bombardment of Bardia, and the sinking of an Italian destroyer, before taking part in the battle of Calabria (9 July). Later that month she engaged two Italian cruisers in the battle of Cape Spada, and remained in the eastern Mediterranean until January, when she sailed for home. She patrolled in home waters and the Indian Ocean until 19 November, when she encountered the German raider *Kormoran* off Sharks Bay, Western Australia. In the battle that followed both ships were sunk – *Sydney* was lost with all hands.
Wartime Service (*Perth*):	On the outbreak of war *Perth* was sent to the West Indies, and apart from one brief patrol elsewhere she remained there until March 1940. After a refit in Garden Island, Western Australia, *Perth* spent two months escorting convoys between Australia and the Middle East. From June to November she was the flagship of the Australia Squadron, based in home waters. In December she was sent to the Mediterranean, and remained there until May 1941, when she was damaged in an air attack. After being repaired she returned to Australia. From August to November 1941 she underwent a refit in Sydney, and in February she sailed for the East Indies. She took part in the battle of the Java Sea (27–28 February), and was sunk the following evening while operating in the Sunda Strait.
Wartime Service (*Hobart*):	When the war began *Hobart* was in home waters, and thereupon was engaged in convoy escort work in the Indian Ocean. From June until October 1940 she operated in the Red Sea, before returning to Australia. She then operated in the South West Pacific – mainly in the Coral Sea – as part of Task Force 44 (74 from May 1943 on). In July 1943, off New Georgia, she was torpedoed by a Japanese submarine, but was able to limp back to Sydney. Repairs lasted until early 1945, when she rejoined TF 74, which was operating off Borneo. She supported the landings at Tarakan and Balikpapan, before steaming north to Japan. She was in Tokyo Bay when Japan surrendered.

Of the three light cruisers in her class, HMAS *Sydney* was the least modified. Her single 4in guns were fitted with gun shields, four 20mm anti-aircraft guns were added, and an improved aircraft catapult was provided, but she was lost in action before any further improvements could be undertaken. She even lacked the suite of radars mounted in her two sister ships.

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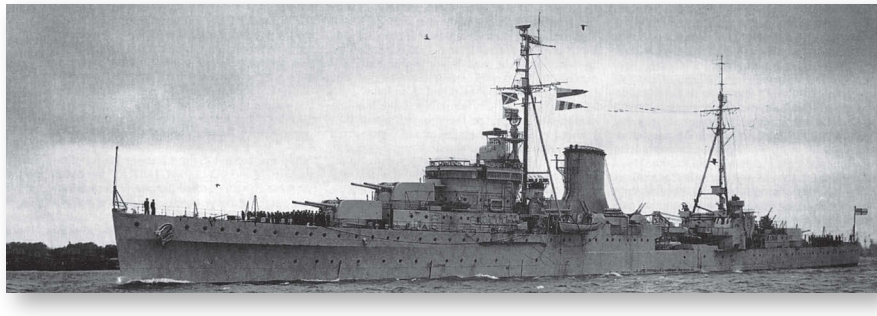
HMAS *PERTH* IN ACTION IN THE SUNDA STRAIT, 1942

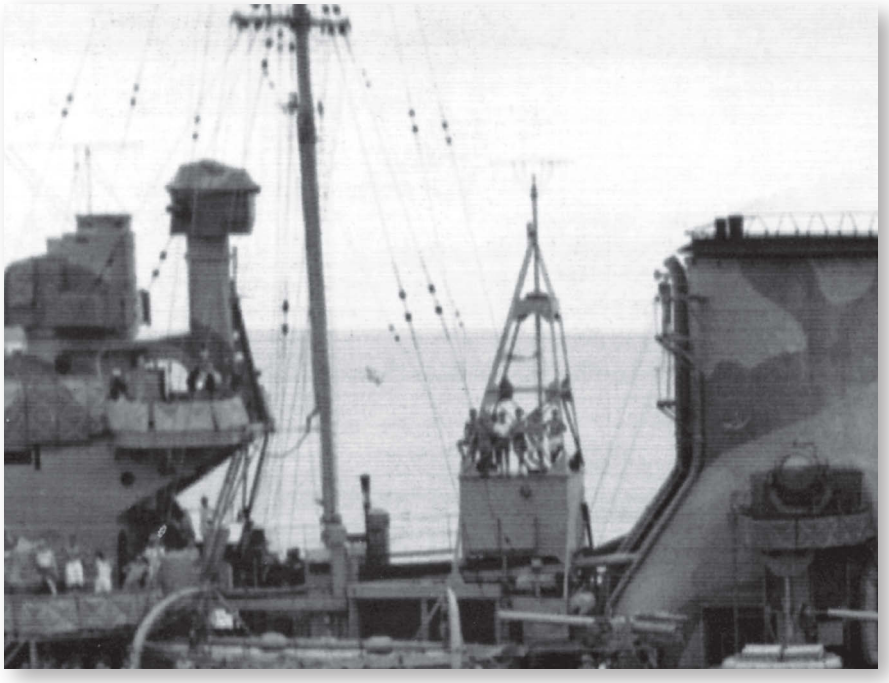
After serving in the Mediterranean, HMAS *Perth* returned to Australia in late 1941, and so was in home waters when Japan declared war. After two months of convoy duty the cruiser joined ABDA, the American-British-Dutch-Australian alliance set up to defend South East Asia from the Japanese. After the fall of Singapore in February 1942, *Perth* was based in the Dutch East Indies, and on 27 February she took part in the disastrous battle of the Java Sea. *Perth* survived the debacle, but the following day she was passing through the Sunda Strait in company with the American heavy cruiser USS *Houston* when a Japanese invasion force was encountered. In the confused night action that followed – the battle of the Sunda Strait – the two Allied cruisers were set upon by 12 Japanese destroyers, supported by cruisers. The fighting began shortly after 11pm, but despite inflicting damage on their opponents the Allied warships were simply overwhelmed. *Perth* was hit by several Japanese torpedoes, and she sank at 00.25am, three miles off the north-eastern tip of Java. *Houston* succumbed some 20 minutes later. This view of the action shows the scene at around 11.30pm, as *Perth* engages the destroyers on her starboard beam, just two miles away to the north.

HMS (later HMNZS) *Leander* and *Achilles*: Leander class light cruisers

Displacement:	7,270 tons (standard), 9,408 tons (fully laden) (*Leander*)
	7,030 tons (standard), 9,284 tons (fully laden) (*Achilles*)
Dimensions:	Length: 554ft 6in (169.1m) overall
	Beam: 55ft (16.8m) (*Leander*), 56ft (17m) (*Achilles*)
	Draught: 19ft (5.8m) mean
Propulsion:	Four Parsons turbines, six Admiralty boilers, four propeller shafts, generating 72,000shp
Maximum speed:	32.5 knots
Range:	5,730 nautical miles at 13 knots
Armament:	Eight 6in Mark XXIII guns in four twin turrets
	Four 4in Mark V guns in four twin mounts (*Leander*)
	Four 4in Mark V guns in four single mounts (*Achilles*)
	Three 4-barrelled 0.5in machine gun mountings
	Eight 21in torpedoes in two quadruple launchers
	Aircraft: One aircraft (Supermarine Walrus), with catapult
Armour:	Belt: 1–3.5in
	Deck: 1in
	Turrets and Conning Tower: 1in
Complement:	570 men
Wartime Modifications (*Leander*):	June 1941: Catapult and aircraft removed, four-barrelled 2-pdr 'pom-pom' added.
	October 1941: Catapult and aircraft re-installed, four-barrelled 2-pdr removed, five single 20mm guns added.
	January 1943: Type 273 (surface search) radar added, four single 20mm guns added, catapult and aircraft removed.
	April 1944: 'X' twin 6in turret removed, one twin and two 20mm single guns added, two four-barrelled 40mm Bofors added.
Wartime Modifications (*Achilles*):	April 1942: Single 4in gun removed, seven single 20mm guns added.
	August 1943: 'X' twin 6in turret removed, three single 4in guns replaced by four twin mountings, four four-barrelled 2-pdr 'pom-poms' added, existing 20mm single guns replaced by seven 20mm guns on twin mounts, and four 20mm guns on single mounts added.
	April 1944: Type 273 (surface search), Type 279 (air warning), Type 284 and 285 (fire control) radars added.
	February 1945: Two twin 20mm guns removed, one single 20mm and four single 40mm Bofors guns added.
Wartime Service (*Leander*):	*Leander* was in home waters as part of Royal Naval New Zealand Division at the start of the war and employed in a convoy protection role in the Indian Ocean from September 1939 to March 1941. In February she sank the Italian raider *Ramb I* off Bombay. She joined the Mediterranean Fleet in June, when she saw action against Vichy French warships, remaining there until the end of the year. She returned to New Zealand in November, and underwent a brief refit. Throughout 1942 and early 1943 she served in the South West Pacific as part of the ANZAC Squadron, participating in campaigns in the Solomon Islands and New Hebrides. In July 1943 she took part in the battle of Kolombangara, where she was hit by a Japanese torpedo. She was sent to Boston for repairs, which continued until the end of hostilities.
Wartime Service (*Achilles*):	*Achilles* was engaged on trade protection duties as part of Royal Naval New Zealand Division at the start of war. In November she participated in the battle of the River Plate where she suffered light damage. She returned to New Zealand for repairs, and resumed trade protection duties until December 1941. In February she joined the ANZAC Squadron in the South West Pacific, and remained in the theatre until February 1943, when she was hit by a bomb off New Georgia. She returned to Britain for repairs, and on being recommissioned in May 1944 she joined the British Eastern (later Pacific) Fleet. She remained in Pacific waters until the end of the war.



Like her sister ship *Achilles*, HMNZS *Leander* had her 'X' turret removed in 1944, while undergoing repairs following damage received during the battle of Kolombangara. These repairs lasted until the end of the war; this photograph shows her immediate post-war appearance.



During the war both Canada and New Zealand developed their own radar sets. An experimental system was installed on HMNZS *Achilles* in May 1940, and by the summer of 1941 improved fire control (SWG) and air warning (SW) sets were installed on board the cruiser. This photograph taken in February 1942 shows these arrays, mounted on a rig forward of *Achilles'* funnel, and on her foremast

HMS (later HMNZS) *Gambia*: Cape Colony class (Fiji group) light cruiser

Displacement:	8,530 tons (standard), 10,450 tons (fully laden)
Dimensions:	Length: 555ft 6in (169.3m) overall Beam: 62ft (18.9m) Draught: 19ft 10in (6.0m) mean
Propulsion:	Four Parsons turbines, four Admiralty boilers, four propeller shafts, generating 80,000shp
Maximum speed:	32.25 knots
Range:	6,520 nautical miles at 13 knots
Armament:	Twelve 6in Mark XXIII guns in four triple turrets Eight 4in Mark XVI guns in four twin mounts Two four-barrelled 2-pdr 'pom-poms' Ten twin and five single 20mm guns Six 21in torpedoes in two triple launchers
Sensors:	Type 272 (surface search), Type 281 (air warning), Type 274 and 283 (fire control)
Armour:	Belt: 1–3.5in Deck: 2in Turrets and Conning Tower: 1–2in
Complement:	733 men
Modifications in RNZN service:	None
Service with RNZN:	After partial transfer to the RNZN and on completion of her refit in late 1944, *Gambia* spent some months on Atlantic patrol duties, before being sent to join the British Eastern (later Pacific) Fleet. She was fully transferred to the RNZN in May 1944 and operated in the East Indies and Indian Ocean until the end of the year. After a brief refit in Auckland she joined Task Force 113, and operated off Okinawa and Formosa, returning briefly for a refit before seeing action off Japan, shortly before the end of hostilities.

HMS (later HMCS) *Uganda*: Cape Colony class (Uganda group) light cruiser

Displacement:	8,530 tons (standard), 10,800 tons (fully laden)
Dimensions:	Length: 555ft 6in (169.3m) overall Beam: 62ft (18.9m) Draught: 19ft 10in (6.0m) mean
Propulsion:	Four Parsons turbines, four Admiralty boilers, four propeller shafts, generating 80,000shp
Maximum speed:	32.25 knots
Range:	6,520 nautical miles at 13 knots
Armament:	Nine 6in Mark XXIII guns in three triple turrets Eight 4in Mark XVI guns in four twin mounts Three four-barrelled 2-pdr 'pom-poms' Four twin and eight single 20mm guns Six 21in torpedoes in two triple launchers Aircraft: Two aircraft (Supermarine Walrus), with catapult
Sensors:	Type 272 (surface search), Type 281 (air warning), Type 284 (fire control)
Armour:	Belt: 1–3.5in Deck: 2in Turrets and Conning Tower: 1–2in
Complement:	733 men
Modifications in RCN Service:	April 1945: Aircraft and catapult removed, together with four twin 20mm guns, three four-barrelled and two single 2-pdr 'pom-poms' added. Type 277 and 293 (surface search) replaced Type 272, Type 274 (fire control) replaced Type 284.
Service with RCN:	After transfer to the RCN in Charleston SC, *Uganda* sailed to Britain for a brief refit. She was then sent to the Pacific, and joined the British Pacific Fleet in March 1945. As part of Task Force 57 she saw action off Formosa, Truk and the Ryukyu Islands, before supporting carrier operations against the Japanese mainland.

HMCS *Ontario*: Cape Colony class (Minotaur group) light cruiser

Displacement:	8,800 tons (standard), 11,130 tons (fully laden)
Dimensions:	Length: 555ft 6in (169.3m) overall Beam: 63ft (19.2m) Draught: 20ft 8in (6.3m) mean
Propulsion:	Four Parsons turbines, four Admiralty boilers, four propeller shafts, generating 80,000shp
Maximum speed:	32.25 knots
Range:	6,520 nautical miles at 13 knots
Armament:	Nine 6in Mark XXIII guns in three triple turrets Ten 4in Mark XVI guns in five twin mounts Four four-barrelled 2-pdr 'pom-poms' Eight twin and six single 20mm guns Six 21in torpedoes in two triple launchers
Sensors:	Type 272 (surface search), Type 281 (air warning), Type 284 (fire control)
Armour:	Belt: 1–3.5in Deck: 2in Turrets and Conning Tower: 1–2in
Complement:	867 men
Modifications in RCN Service:	June 1945: Twin 20mm removed, and replaced by eight single 40mm Bofors guns.
Service with RCN:	After commissioning into the RCN, *Ontario* sailed to join the British Pacific Fleet, but hostilities ended before she arrived.

The *Black Prince* was a modified Dido class anti-aircraft cruiser, armed with eight quick-firing 5.25in guns in four twin turrets. She entered service with the Royal Navy in late 1943, and spent the last months of the war with the Pacific Fleet. After the war ended she was lent to the Royal New Zealand Navy, and remained with them until the end of her active career in 1961.

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References to illustrations are shown in **bold**.
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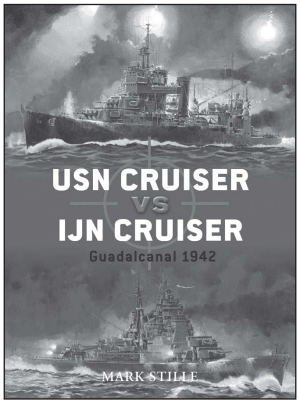

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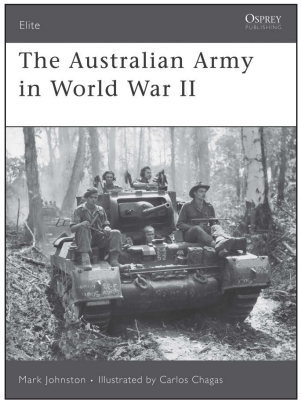

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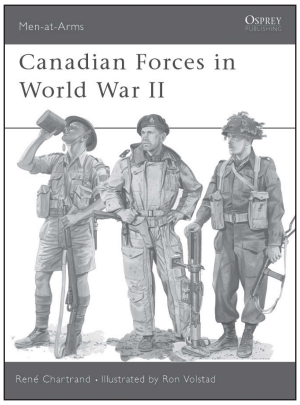

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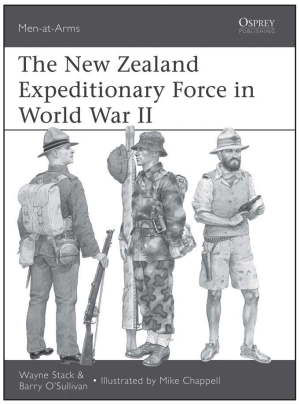
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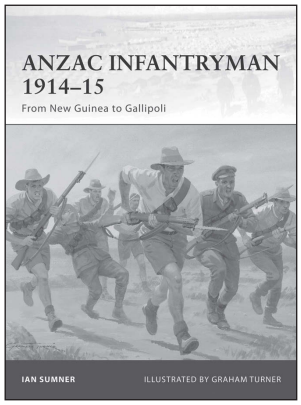

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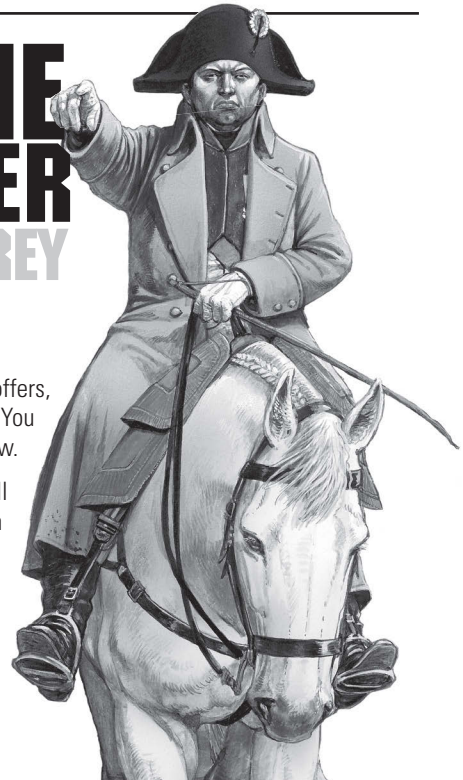

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